LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SOUTH ASIAN EDUCATIONAL LEADERS WITHIN A
BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

AMANDEEP SINGH GREWAL

B.Sc., The University of British Columbia, 1999
B.Ed., The University of British Columbia, 2008

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of South Asian administrators within a British Columbia School District (BCSD). Through a qualitative research design involving hour long semi-structured interviews, 70% of South Asian administrators within the BCSD were interviewed regarding three major research questions: (a) the challenges South Asian administrators face or have faced in their role as administrators or in the attainment of their positions as educational leaders in the BCSD, (b) how the daily experiences of these administrators impact their leadership style, and (c) how these administrators described their impact on the educational experiences of South Asian students in their schools. A Critical Race Theory theoretical framework was used to analyze interview data. The three major findings associated with each of the research questions, respectively, were: (a) South Asian administrators face endemic racism within their roles in the BCSD that prejudice their work capacities, (b) South Asian administrators have a distinct leadership style as it relates to South Asian students which is influenced by their service-oriented upbringing rooted in their common cultural orientation, and (c) South Asian administrators believe they have a greater positive impact on the educational experiences of South Asian students than White administrators. These three major findings were a critical counter-story of the tenuous space of leadership within the BCSD for South Asian administrators, and the effect of their role modelling upon the schooling experiences of South Asian students in the larger hegemonic institutional structures of schooling in the BCSD. The opportunity to voice this counter-story opened up spaces for dialogue around issues of race and racism within the BCSD, and may serve to inform a more critical anti-racist praxis for potential future policy shifts in the BCSD.
Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, A.S. Grewal. This research was approved by the University of British Columbia’s Behavioural Research Ethics Board, certificate number H13-00446. This research was also approved by the BCSD Research Ethics Board.
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Dedication

For my dear wife Amrita, with love. Your love for me is the greatest insight in my life.
Chapter One: Introduction

Background

As a South Asian high school educator within British Columbia (B.C.), I have experienced both institutional and systemic racism. The challenges that this racism has brought have impeded my ability to do my job in many ways and have presented unforeseen challenges to my aspirations for leadership positions.

I have experienced much of this racism at a school with a large South Asian student population as compared to other schools within B.C. with smaller numbers of South Asian students. For example, it is common knowledge at this school that the South Asian boys are forbidden to stand in the hallway in groups next to their lockers because there is a belief that they are “up to no good.” Many teachers dissuade these boys from congregating and oftentimes send many of these boys to the office simply for standing together. Furthermore, student discipline at my school is disproportionately skewed toward South Asian students. There are far more South Asian students than non-South Asian students suspended for truancy.

I am often looked upon as a spokesperson for South Asian students at schools, and in many ways feel that I am responsible for rationalizing their behaviours for White teachers. White teachers have often voiced concerns to me about South Asian student behavioural incidents using language that clearly highlights the racial nature of their views toward these students. White teachers have often framed South Asian student discipline issues as what “your people” and “your kind” have done. One White teacher explained to me with some vigour that she told a South Asian student misbehaving with a dollar coin on his forehead to “get that Bindi off your head,” and she went on to explain with pride how the South Asian students were shocked to know she knew what a Bindi (a decorative dot placed on the centre of the forehead in
many South Asian cultures) was. In reality, many students later shared with me their shock had
less to do with her knowledge of the reference and more to do with the insensitivity of the
comment given the cultural sacredness of wearing a bindi. While I was standing with another
White colleague, she stopped a South Asian student who was wearing a head cloth and explained
to him that he was late for class and “What would Guru Nanak say?” This comment was not the
only comment she has made in reference to a religious dogma practiced by Sikh South Asian
students at that school, this teacher also asks South Asian students to duly note that she is Guru
Gorah (White Guru). And by virtue, undoubtedly, their White Guru.

It must also be noted that the White teachers at a previous school did not restrict
racialized comments simply toward South Asian students, I was often the brunt of many racial
references made about “brown” people. During an incident at a strike picket line in 2014, a city
cleanup crew was draining a fire hydrant across from a school I worked at where teachers were
picketing. The murky water draining from the fire hydrant prompted a comment from my White
colleague, “Look, the water is brown like you…and it’s violent like South Asians.” In addition,
colleagues have often commented that “you’re brown, you’re rich.” I have also been present to
racialized comments directed toward other South Asian colleagues, including principals. In a job
interview for a science position, I witnessed a White male science department head notify me
that my room would probably be Wi-Fi equipped by the South Asian principal himself since “he
is rich.” This was a clear reference to his South Asian identity and the perceived stereotypical
view that “you’re brown, you’re rich.” This is an image of South Asians that I believe is more
connected to an association with bad money and gangs and/or spoiled brown boys than being
made in reference to clean money earned through honest living in earnest professions.
Racialized comments from colleagues have also inhibited my work capacity on certain projects around the school. As part of a joint venture between a philanthropic group and a school I worked at, I was asked by a previous White female principal at this school to be the lead teacher on a seminar series directed at South Asian students (particularly boys) and their empowerment. The principal selected me to head the project with her at my school because I was the only teacher of South Asian descent at the school. I was not given any support for this project by the principal who was completely absentee at meetings and community events related to the project. As a result, I was asked to take on a tremendous workload that involved organizing and recruiting over sixty South Asian students by myself especially after a female White colleague who was assigned to the project with me quit the project stating emphatically “I’m not South Asian, why should I stress over all this!” My bilingual status as English and Punjabi speaker has also been challenged by a White principal. In a formal meeting, I was asked not to speak anything other than English within the school and certainly not speak Punjabi with the South Asian students that I taught. This demand clearly violated my identity rights as a Canadian South Asian.

Furthermore, as a member of the science department at a school last year I was allocated the most ill-equipped science room within the school. However, what is most egregious is that this room was not only the most ill-equipped science room in the school, but the most sparsely equipped room in the entire school. I taught science in a wood shop full of old wood and woodworking equipment. What made this situation unjust was that I was denied a proper science room in favour of a male White colleague less senior and a newcomer to the school. Further still, when parents of students took the issue of my improper science room to the school board, they were notified that I was given that room because I had personally asked for the woodshop
over a proper science room. Questioning the truth behind the board’s comments, the parents contacted me directly with their doubts and asked for the truth behind the matter.

Nothing has highlighted the racialized institutional landscape within which I work and the effect upon my future ambitions for administration within B.C. than the challenges I have faced in seeing this research to fruition. Upon submitting my research proposal to the British Columbia School District (BCSD) Research Ethics Committee for approval, the school board expressed tremendous trepidation over the racialized nature of my topic. My research proposal was forwarded past the BCSD Research Ethics Committee onto senior staff at the BCSD board offices who upon reading my research proposal noted that the part of my introductory chapter highlighting the room inequity situation would be rectified and “you will be getting a nice science room next year.” This statement was made as part of a larger request to take out certain sensitive topics within my introductory chapter that highlighted the racialized context in which I worked. In fact, I did receive a science room to teach in as everyone in the science department was shuffled from room to room to settle on a situation that was in line with seniority rights and time at the school.

What makes this situation more unsettling is that in my previous two years at that school in the wood shop, I had asked for the room to be cleaned up and the school administration showed no urgency with the apparent health issue at hand. Situated within the wood shop was old wood that filled half the room, as well as a thirty year old carpet which undoubtedly contributed to poor air quality. In addition, an old rusty engine sat in the middle of the second half of the room. Despite half a year of requests to clean the room, the administration did not act until I became sick and was forced to take a week off of work. Yet, when my male White colleague entered the room, the principal engaged in multiple conversations surrounding any
requests he wished to make for changes within the room – both from cleanliness and learning equipment standpoint. It is clear that there were inequities surrounding accommodations made for the male White teacher who was situated in the wood shop and my countless prior requests for accommodations when I was in the same room.

In addition, the senior staff of the BCSD board offices made a subtle threat to sabotage my research participant pool, and ultimately prevent the entire research endeavour, by stating that if I did not change my research topic to something less racialized that all South Asian administrators in the district would be contacted, preventing their future participation in my study. This action would have ultimately prevented me from fulfilling the thesis requirements of my Master’s degree, and ultimately would have been a direct assault on my education and inevitable future career aspirations for leadership since all administrators in the BCSD are required to have a Master’s degree. The actions of the senior staff of the BCSD board offices are reflective of a possible larger institutional ideology of racism, discrimination, and oppression of people of colour that is not as overt as the times of segregation but nonetheless aims to similarly suppress the voice of those socially marginalized.

Given the kind of discrimination that I have faced, it is hard to imagine that I could apply for a leadership position in the BCSD despite my aspirations and the clear systemic need for vice-principals from diverse ethnic backgrounds to match changing student demographics. The senior staff of the BCSD board offices that were emotional about the nature of my research are also the hiring chairs for principals and vice-principals within the district. Despite this reality, there still are South Asian educators within the BCSD who are principals and vice-principals. It is clear that they have successfully navigated what may have been a complicated terrain in order
to attain positions of leadership. As such, I felt that this phenomenon merited a larger investigation.

**Research Significance**

As I began my study, I realized that research into the general experiences of South Asian educational leaders was very sparse. Much of Canadian research into the racialized educational landscape has come from research within the Toronto School Board and very little, if any, research has been done in British Columbia. The general literature in this area describes equity issues in education related to teachers of diverse ethnic backgrounds within the field of education as a whole (Anamma et al., 2013; Sperandio, 2010, 2009; O’Brien, 2009; Vass, 2014). There is limited research on the negative effects of racialization of ethnic leaders, but also the positive outcomes for these individuals. Similarly, there is little research on ethnic leaders’ ability to positively influence marginalized minority students of the same ethnic background. Studies surrounding leadership styles have focused primarily on the differences between leadership styles presented by White principals and have not taken into account the influence of ethnicity upon leadership styles (Armstrong, 2010; Blackmore, 2010; Brandt, T. & Laiho, M., 2013; Brown, K. M., 2004; Ghilay, Y. & Gilay, R., 2011; Heck, R. & Hallinger, P., 2005; Leithwood, K., 2008; Leithwood, K. & Harris, A. & Hopkins, D., 2008). Furthermore, the literature about principal succession focuses predominantly on the implications for principal selection and training programmes and does little to shed light on the racialized landscape of principal selection (Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Fink & Brayman, 2004; Frankenberg & Diem, 2012; Walker & Kwan, 2012; Young & Oto, 2004).
It is my hope that the current study will address some of the gaps in the mainstream research and link the experiences of South Asian educational leaders to issues of principal succession, racialization of experience, and influence upon minority student schooling.

**Research Purpose**

The purpose of my research was to investigate the lived experiences of seven South Asian administrators working within the BCSD to gain greater understanding of their educational leadership realities. The specific research questions included the following:

1. What challenges (if any) have the South Asian administrators in this study faced in their role as administrators or in the attainment of their positions as educational leaders in the BCSD?
2. How (if at all) do the daily experiences of the South Asian administrators in this study impact their leadership style?
3. How (if at all) do the South Asian administrators in this study impact the educational experiences of South Asian students in their schools?
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

As an Indo-Canadian secondary school teacher with aspirations for school administration and leadership, I have noticed a significant lack of ethnic leaders in administrative positions within the BCSD. A large majority of the administrators in the district are of Caucasian background and very few of them are South Asian. Furthermore, I have noticed an increase in White female administrators over the years whilst the numbers of ethnic leaders has not increased at the same pace despite the growing majority of the ethnic student body within the BCSD. This absence is not specific to the BCSD, but rather is a result of a larger ideology of institutional racism which needs further investigation.

The literature review that follows outlines the racialized experiences of administrators by first highlighting equity issues within educational leadership alongside research related to principal succession practices. I then link and explore this research to racism within education in order to contextualize the apparent lack of ethnic leaders in positions of formal leadership. Lastly, I outline the research highlighting the limitations and possibilities of South Asian administrators’ impact, as role models, on the schooling experiences of South Asian students.

Equity and Principal Succession

It has been clearly shown that structural barriers toward Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) leaders’ career progress are endemic in the United Kingdom (Coleman & Campbell-Stevens, 2010). BME leaders perceived a lack of progress largely due to perceived discrimination and racism. Yet this perception is not isolated to school administrators of colour alone, as university faculty of colour also experience marginalization at the hands of perceived
racism (Griffin, Bennett & Harris, 2013). However, it is apparent that this perception is grounded in reality.

In a seminal paper highlighting the racialized nature of workplaces, Orelus (2013) elucidates the nature of this perceived racism as significant aggressions embedded in race and race relations. By situating the personal and professional lived experiences of professors of colour with institutional racism within education, Orelus describes the effects of this racism upon professors of colour and the inherent limitations it puts on them (p.1). It is apparent that the racialized journey of these professors is rooted in stereotypical views of people of colour within the professional realm. Orelus declares that professors of colour “constantly feel the pressure to prove that they are intelligent, competent, and good citizens, and that they are not irresponsible or angry – racial constructs whose repercussions many have to deal with” (p.8). This navigation has been articulated as the “double consciousness” of professionals of colour (Levin, Walker, Haberler & Jackson-Boothby, 2013). This identity which brings together the professional and personal is oftentimes not compatible with the institution at hand; therefore, professionals of colour often navigate through dual identities which might prevent them from performing at their best as they try to balance and maintain cultural norms (p.325). Levin et al. contest that the perceived racism might simply be attributed to the conflict between institutionalization and social identity (p.325), and that applying institutional theory to the analysis of socialization and institutionalization of professionals of colour is a better lens of analysis. However, this explanation may not be suited to the Canadian educational system because it reduces the complexity of perceived racism to strictly institutional issues and not the wider systemic issues of racism located within Canadian schools.
Carr (1999) outlines the nature of institutional racism at the board level within the Toronto Board of Education (TBE). Carr argues that the culture of the Board has exacerbated the perception and truth of racism within the TBE through clear systemic discrimination manifest in policy and an inability to clearly articulate anti-racist and equity issues within schools and as related to staff (p.1). He argues that barriers to promotion for staff of colour can be explained by the power and tradition dynamics at the Board level that clearly prevent racial minorities from progressing into leadership positions. Employees of colour explained that the lack of representation of minorities in specific areas within the board were structural representations of racism (p.6). Although Carr argues that it is understandable that practice lags behind policy, he duly notes that the transition toward gender balance within the TBE has superseded the importance of policy related to anti-racist staffing practices, and notes that “although more senior administrators are now White women, there is still the perception that the decision-making centre is relatively inaccessible to marginalized groups and interest” (p.11).

In contrast, Walker and Kwan (2012) go on to explain this perceived lack of minority representation as easily explained through an understanding of the notion of homosociability, and argue implicitly against notions of racial discrimination in underrepresentation issues. They argue that principal selection panels oftentimes prefer candidates with backgrounds most closely aligned with those of their own (p.201), and that “the importance of candidates connecting ideologically and practically with the school…” (p.200) is the reason for minority group underrepresentation at the principal level. However, Walker and Kwan fail to recognize that their findings clearly legitimatize the perpetuation of institutional oppression and racism that society is trying to get away from and that ideological dismissal due to ethnic differences is a significant form of racism/oppression.
Frankenberg and Diem (2013) argue against the idea that school boards are slow to change diversity policies because of the electoral nature of the board body itself. They argue that school board members are often from the elites of society, despite turnover issues, and that the common agenda of those elites is to be less supportive of change related to diversity policies because this would ultimately lessen privilege to elites (p.117).

Yet, Young and Oto (2004) lend credence to Walker and Kwan’s notion of the need for selector-selectee cultural commonality by explaining that a social distance perspective explains the lack of minority representation within education. In a study of principal screening practices for teacher hiring, Young and Oto isolated for variables of age and ethnicity for equally educated – and credentialed – individuals. They found that principals predominantly hired teachers who shared their ethnicity (dominant culture) when asked to choose between White and non-White candidates with identical credentials. The findings indicate that principals’ perception of credentials varied based on the candidate’s ethnicity (p.317). Young and Oto argue that this behaviour is not surprising because it is easily explained from a social distance perspective and that “public school principals are probably unaware of their varying sensitivities when it comes to screening the paper credentials of teacher candidates” (p.317). This naïve notion of principal ignorance and its adamant defence under the guise of a social distance perspective is a clear example of the nature of tug-of-war that the fight for anti-racism policy has undertaken.

It is clear from the literature that the more diverse the school board the greater likelihood that minority candidates will attain positions of leadership in a fair and equitable manner. However, Bernstein and Bilimoria (2013) argue that the inclusion of ethnic minority members into boards is only effective if majority members employ an integration-and-learning approach to diversity policy making (p.636). They contend that boards having ethnic minority members
promote assimilation of views within board decision making based on creation of sameness throughout their organizations, and force ethnic minority members to feel that issues of inequitable treatment and opportunity are not a comfortable issue to voice. Ultimately, Bernstein and Bilimoria explain that “this perspective ignores the potential for employees’ culturally based differences to benefit the organization” (p.638). As such, it is clear that mere inclusion of ethnic minorities within school board membership does not ameliorate issues of anti-racism policymaking and diversity staffing perspectives.

**Racism in Education**

A recent article in a local Vancouver newspaper (Todd, 2014) outlined workplace unfairness and racism in Vancouver. Of 658 ethnic Chinese and South Asian British Columbians polled, over half reported “small amounts” of discrimination. Surprisingly however, at least six percent reported significant discrimination. Most importantly, 16 percent of those who faced discrimination attributed it to their ethnicity. This article provides an important example of how discrimination linked to race is a prevalent issue for the minority population in Vancouver.

Denevi and Pastan (2006) argue that racism within education is difficult for Whites to address because of group membership issues. They argue that Whites identify more as individuals than members of a group, and as such perpetuate racism through a superficial commentary on racism that are manifestations of their White privilege which preclude them from having to act on any awareness they may have. In fact, Denevi and Pastan argue that “White educators tend to embrace gender affinity groups…there seems to be a greater establishment of pride around gender identity as opposed to racial identity” (p.71). According to Denevi and Pastan, it appears that most Whites are simply unawares of group affiliation dynamics, and as
such, lack the necessary sensitivities to be aware and act upon inequities based on racial
discrimination.

Although it must be noted that many of these ideas essentialize White people, this notion
is furthered by Raby’s (2007) study of predominantly White teenage girls in the Toronto area
who described racially motivated incidents at their schools as “just joking around.” This kind of
ambivalence is also apparent at the principal level. Aveling (2007) describes a study of 35
Western Australian principals who overwhelmingly reported a lack of racism at their schools. In
fact, any racially motivated incidents were dealt with as individual pathologies that presented as
outliers to the school norm. Aveling argues that “the findings suggest that the majority of these
school managers did not understand the nature and extent of racism and were ill-equipped to deal
with the more covert expressions of racism” (p.69). In a similar Canadian study, McMahon
(2007) came to the same conclusions that White administrators view racism as organizational
policy issues and not so much school level issues and tended to view racism as an individual
pathology presenting as outlier behaviour.

Raby and Aveling make it clear that the multiculturalism practiced in schools is a
benevolent multiculturalism that lacks depth in its ability to address issues of racism. In fact,
Aveling argues that learning about another’s culture does not enlighten one to the racism
practiced by one’s own. In fact, Raby argues that education erroneously compares multicultural
education with anti-racist education. Anti-racist education involves moving away from notions
of tolerance of diversity (multicultural education) towards notions of power and difference (Dei,
educational administrators, through their erroneous and naïve conceptions of Whiteness and
racism, preferred multiculturalism to anti-racism.
Similarly, Bradley (2006) argues that Canadian multicultural policy lacks the necessary teeth to address issues of equity in school and within the educational workforce. He contends that the lack of engagement with direct race language, and the unpacking of terms such as “visible minority” which support highlight notions of othering do little to combat systemic racism and only serve to cement the normative Whiteness of the educational institution. Geoffrey and Carrington (1996) support this notion of a multiculturalism that is more critically engaging because they contend that multicultural education without critical engagement can unintentionally foster more prejudice (p.9). They further argue for the case of a “reconstituted multiculturalism” that centres on critical engagement with children’s misconceptions so as to eradicate the apparent “new racism” that is an unfortunate artefact of traditional multiculturalism (p.12).

Research shows that White administrators see racism with a different lens than non-White administrators. Ryan (2003) explains that some White administrators do not see stereotyping as a form of racism. Ryan argues that more research must be undertaken into administrator views because “… while scholars have attended to the perspectives of students, teachers, and parents, they have largely ignored educational administrators” (p.63). Ryan elaborates that the reason for White administrators’ reluctance to acknowledge racism in their schools is centred upon three issues: (a) they are conditioned to ignore racism; (b) they feel obliged to convey a positive image of the school at all times; and (c) their view of racism is too narrow. Ryan lends credence to Raby and Aveling’s findings that the reduction of racism to personal prejudice and addressing racism as such at an individual level ignores the systemic racism and stereotyping that leads to the inequities we see today. Further, addressing issues of
systemic racism would transition schools away from the benevolent and tokenistic multiculturalism alluded to by Aveling towards critical anti-racism education supported by Dei.

In a seminal paper outlining the nature of invisible racism that most administrators cease to recognize, Lacocque (2013) declares simple stereotyping as a form of “racial microaggression” (p.436). Lacocque describes racial microaggressions as made up of three subcategories: (a) microinsults which are behavioural or verbal remarks that convey insensitivities to racial heritage or identity, (b) microassaults which are explicit racial derogations associated with discriminatory behaviour, and (c) microinvalidations which are verbal or behavioural remarks that assault the psyche or emotions of a person of colour. According to Lacocque’s rubric for racial microaggressions, the resistance of White administrators to recognize racism within their school as a systemic issue rather than an individual issue is a form of microassault since it is racially avoidant behaviour.

Brooks and Clunis (2007) state that it is important that the voices of ethnic administrators be heard to clarify and accurately describe the plight of people of colour within education. As alluded to by Pilkington (2013), senior management has no ethnicity and manifests an institutional reluctance to address issues around institutional racism for this very reason (p.225). Although contextualizing the problem to a lack of representation of ethnicity within upper management, Pilkington notes that it is still most striking to see continuity of old norms and not change (p.227).

Dei (1999) argues that change can only come from an anti-racist praxis that addresses issues of social difference and its implications for education. He argues that critical educators must engage in transformative discourses and that “it is crucial for critical writings to interrupt the complacency of conventional educational discourse” (p.395). Arguing for the necessity of
shared power relationships within education to affect this change, Dei purports that implications for social justice necessitate the need to add ethnic members to faculty in order to genuinely change educational discourse through the necessary critical self-reflection that only faculty of colour can afford (p.405). Only then will the White monopoly on knowledge be interrupted and a genuine anti-racist praxis generated. Dei (1995a) argues for an “integrative anti-racism” that crosses race, class, gender lines, sexual identity, and ability to better contextualize anti-racist discourse within the pre-existing institutional structures. This, in effect, would engage ant-racist discourse at a level beyond individual prejudices and discriminatory actions towards entrenched notions of institutional and systemic racism and oppression (p.13). A decentering of power as such would afford a critical analysis of the dominant-subordinate dichotomy of power within race relations.

**Marginalized Minority Student Schooling Experiences and Ethnic Role Models**

Much research has been conducted outlining the differential schooling experiences of marginalized minority students – students whose ethnicity is different from the dominant language and cultural constructs of their schooling experience (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Lund, 2002; Mathani, 2002; Ngo, 2006; Tupper, Carson, Johnson, & Mangat, 2008). It is evident from the literature that marginalized minority students, including Indo-Canadian students, have starkly different schooling experiences than dominant culture students. The causes of this differential schooling experience is purported to originate from the differences in the language and culture of minority students and the power dynamics within schools that mimic societal power dynamics. This dissonance among minority students and their degree of school engagement and success is reflective of their successful negotiation between their ethnic and school cultures, and their comfort with the power dynamics in schools.
In a review and clarification of his 1978 seminal paper in the area of minority student schooling experiences, Ogbu (1998) puts forth a cultural-ecological theory of minority student school performance. He defines cultural-ecological theory as a theory that views the schooling experience of minority students from an ecological perspective and a cultural perspective (p.158). The ecological perspective describes the broader school and societal environment in which minority students are situated, whilst the cultural perspective refers to the way in which these minorities view their world. Ogbu argues that the ecology of minority students includes their differential school treatment reflective of the same experiences they face in the wider society. They face instrumental discrimination in the form of educational pressures reflective of disparate employment and wage opportunities, relational discrimination reflective of social and interactional segregation, and symbolic discrimination reflective of the lack of positive acknowledgement of their cultures and languages. Importantly, he notes that these hegemonic educational forces go unchanged from generation to generation of minority students (p.166).

In response to this reality, Ogbu purports the need for role models for minority students. These role models are symbols of success. These individuals have successfully navigated the power dynamics of schooling to overcome instrumental discrimination by being economically stable, relational discrimination by achieving acculturation – the process by which an individual acquires the culture of the society she/he inhabits – while retaining their minority identity, and symbolic discrimination by holding positions of respect and authority. Further, these role models provide students the motivation to succeed in school while garnering respect and admiration that encourages emulation.

Cummins (1997) acknowledges Ogbu’s description of power dynamics and their effect on minority student achievement; however, Cummins argues for a more inclusive framework
that addresses power dynamics in a collaborative manner where educator-student interactions actively address the coercive power relations in schools. This framework declares the need for an active engagement with student identity negotiation through a negotiation of power dynamics by focusing on internal psychological processes rather than external ecological and cultural processes. Cummins argues that multicultural policy is a façade that deflects attention away from the slow destruction of student identity through structural discrimination. For example, similar to Ogbu’s recommendation for role models, Cummins notes the low representation of minority educators on staff in schools and how this symbolizes systemic racism. Unlike Ogbu though, Cummins attributes minority student academic achievement as directly related to identity formation dynamics, rather than cultural or ecological factors that are extensions of multicultural notions.

While acknowledging the importance of multicultural interventions, Cummins (1996) argues for the need to focus on human identity formation in addition to multicultural pedagogy in empowering marginalized minority students. He states that effective education should consider the human being as well. He notes that minority student failure is a complex issue (p.659), but describes the need for education to challenge the societal status quo. Within his framework, multicultural pedagogy plays an important role but far more important is the idea of student identity formation as a result of their interactions with educators. He argues for the need to address the “bicultural ambivalence” (p.660) in education – how the recognition of identity negotiation by educators can help minority students with acculturation which directly prevents student failure. He declares that “widespread student failure does not occur in minority groups that are positively oriented toward both their own and the dominant culture” (p.660). He states that the obvious impact of identity factors on student empowerment justifies an active
engagement with this issue alongside academic/pedagogical initiatives. Essentially, this is Cummins qualified agreement with Ogbu with respect to cultural factors and their influence on minority student achievement; however, Cummins is clear to point out that addressing bicultural identity formation needs supersedes any culturally sensitive schooling initiatives. Yet, Cummins is apprehensive about the ability to persuade school boards and policy makers to address such needs because of the nature of resistance towards change in power structures.

In trying to accommodate the two previous perspectives, Nasir and Hand (2006) challenge past literature explaining the differential schooling experiences of minority students by recommending that we look at the problem through a sociocultural lens. They purport that sociocultural theory – a theory that considers both social and cultural aspects of student learning – may be better suited to explain minority student schooling experiences. They explain that sociocultural theory is more versatile than previous theories since it considers multiple factors and levels of analysis that previous theories have not been able to do. What is clear is that their application of sociocultural theory is more pedagogically focussed and lacks critical engagement with the important issue of race and power dynamics alluded to by both Ogbu and Cummins. In addition, the sociocultural perspective focuses more on collective psychology as is manifest in cultural activities and not on the individual psychology of minority students within schools.

Despite the subtle but important difference between sociocultural theory and the perspectives put forth by Ogbu and Cummins, Nasir and Hand do come to many of the same important conclusions. They agree that school life is closely intertwined with societal life, and that schooling for minority students is a complex negotiation of social interactions with teachers. They describe identity as a meshing construct between Ogbu’s cultural component of socio-cultural theory and Cummins’ individual identity; hence, identity in sociocultural theory is
addressed as a construct that is made up of self and the social world of self. It is an identity located both within the self and the social world, so that it is ever changing and shifting over time. As such, they describe learning as a shift not only in the self but also in the outside world. Sociocultural theory purports an engagement with identity issues that is less contingent on psychological processes and more on the alteration of environment (eg. greater representation of minorities in positions of power) and its effect on inner self identity.

In a more pragmatic approach to the study of minority student schooling experiences, and particularly youth disengagement, Dei (2003) outlines an approach he calls inclusive education. Central to his argument is that minority students see their identities in the structures of their schools. He argues that representation of minorities in school structures is central to minority student success; further, disengagement and dropout have less to do with student and home life and more to do with schooling structures. Dei outlines the need for school staff to be representative of the student population and that “the fact of the matter is that, as we read about such changes in Canadian society, it ought to be emphasized that particular changes in the structural and organizational life of schools have not kept pace with such changes in demographics, that is, the racial and ethnic mix of students” (p.243).

Supporting Dei’s notion of inclusive education, Haar and Robicheau (2008) collected survey data from superintendents and principals within the Minnesota area investigating their awareness of English Language Learners (ELL) issues, as well as focus group and interview data related to experiences and perceptions surrounding school leaders of colour (p.2). Their findings clearly demonstrate a need for greater minority school leaders who are reflective of the growing minority student populations within schools. They argue that this will begin to address the need for a “multi-cultural inclusive learning environment” (p.11) that will foster equity in education.
Most importantly, Haar and Robicheau endorse the need to “capture the voices of experienced school leaders of color – specifically their experiences as leaders and their perceptions about meeting the needs of a diverse student population” (p.9). This need is more urgent in the Canadian context of British Columbia, which has seen a marked increase in minority students alongside a lack of representation of ethnic school leaders.

In this chapter I have reviewed some key literature in the area of Educational Leadership related to racism in education with regard to representation and marginalized minority student schooling experiences. This research outlined the reasons for limited numbers of ethnic leaders in education as representative of the racialized nature of principal succession practices. Further, relevant research described the general conditions of racism within education as not only limiting opportunity but also creating damaging environments for ethnic leaders as they negotiated their leadership roles. Research showed the schooling experiences of minority students as marginalized and negatively impacting their identity formation dynamics. I highlighted key insights from this research into the differential schooling experiences of marginalized minority students that purported the need for ethnic role models. This literature alludes to the possibility that such role models positively orient the identity formation dynamics of marginalized minority students and would have a positive effect on the differential schooling experiences of these students. This work is very relevant to my study and I hope to build on and extend this literature especially as it relates to the experiences of the South Asian administrators who participated in my research. My research into the lived experiences of South Asian administrators will link gaps in the research by elucidating the nature of the potential positive impact South Asian role models play in the identity formation dynamics of marginalized South Asian students as these administrators themselves negotiate the racialized educational terrain of the BCSD.
Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

Since the main purpose of my research was to capture the lived experiences of South Asian administrators within the hegemonic and often racialized context of education, it was important that my theoretical framework viewed their narratives through a critical lens. Further, as Dei (2001b) argues, “the relevance of a theory should be seen in how it allows us to understand the complexity of human society and to offer a social and political corrective – that is, the power of theories and ideas to bring about change and transformation in social life” (p.298). As such, my theoretical framework will be rooted in Critical Race Theory (CRT) since it allows for the experiences of racism to be centred to recognize institutional and systemic oppression of experience. Racism and oppression often centre on stories that counter the dominant narrative and require a framework whose central focus is counter-storytelling. A framework centred on CRT allows for a critical analysis of such counter-storytelling.

Critical Race Theory: Early Origins

Critical Race Theory is a movement of scholars concerned with the elucidation of the relationship between power, race and racism as seen in the construction of social roles (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). While considering many of the same issues as conventional civil rights and ethnic studies movements, CRT’s lens contextualizes these issues in the broader economic, historical, and self-interest contexts without embracing the incrementalism lauded by these two movements. Instead, CRT critically views and questions the liberal social order with an eye on the racialized contexts of society. Delgado (2009), a key proponent of CRT, succinctly describes justification for this critical view in stating that “[a]s marginalized people we should strive to increase our power, cohesiveness, and representation in all significant areas of society. We should do this though, because we are entitled to these things and because fundamental fairness
requires this allocation of power” (p.110). In addition, CRT veers away from traditional theory by placing great importance on the activist dimension of anti-racism and strives to transform society’s liberal order by unpacking and disempowering the organization of society along racial hierarchies. Furthermore, CRT’s focus on a race analysis of society’s dominant narratives is important to the themes associated with my research questions.

CRT’s early origins can be traced back to the mid-1970s within the two movements of critical legal studies (CLS) and radical feminism (Hartlep, 2009, p.4). Noticing the stalling efforts of the civil rights movement of the 1960s to combat subtler and more covert forms of racism, many legal scholars and activists came to the realization that a new theory and strategy for gaining ground on the new racialized landscape was needed. Prompted by the early writings of law professor Derrick Bell (1970), legal scholars first showcased CRT at a conference in Madison, Wisconsin in 1989 (Bell, 1993; Delgado, 2001, 2009; Taylor, 2009). CRT was borne out of the marginalization of people of colour associated with the Critical Legal Studies (CLS) movement (Hartlep, 2009, p.5). CLS was a legal movement that aimed to challenge liberalism by denying that law was neutral and inherently right or wrong. CLS scholars purported that rights superseded the singularity of law as right or wrong and put forth the notion of legal indeterminacy in cases – that not every legal case has a right or a wrong outcome (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p.2). Instead, context was more important, and CLS scholars shifted their focus towards racism. Legal scholars borrowed from radical feminism’s insights on power and the social construction of roles within the unseen and largely invisible patterns of domination in society, and placed them in the context of historical wrongs that conventional civil rights thought put forth. As such, CRT was borne from CLS’s legal indeterminacy, radical feminism’s invisible lens on power in social roles, and conventional civil rights’ historical wrongs.
The critical focus of CRT to question the assumed right and wrong perspectives of the dominant narrative is crucial to my research into the professional narratives of South Asian administrators. CRT’s focus upon the context of power and its subversion are central to the elucidation of the counter-stories I plan on investigating.

**Critical Race Theory: Basic Tenets**

The basic tenets of CRT are centred on race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Hartlep, 2009; Khalifa, Dunbar, & Douglasb, 2013). The first tenet of CRT claims that racism is normal to everyday life and is part of the daily experiences of people of colour in overt and covert ways. For example, the institutional culture of society – as put forth by Whites – promotes systemic forms of racism by focussing on ideas of colour-blindness and meritocracy for employment and thus economic gain (Hartlep, 2009). Colour-blindness steals the legitimacy of the “other” in the contexts of the racial economic dissymmetry of society which sees White elites maintain the status quo of their stronghold on power. CRT further purports that notions of meritocracy operate from a position of advantage for White elites whose starting points are advantaged over their minority counterparts. As such, to promote based on merit already disadvantages minorities because the starting point for minorities is disadvantaged over their White counterparts.

This system of white-over-colour serves important purposes both material and psychic (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p.3). One such important purpose is to uphold dominant white interests. CRT describes this idea as “interest convergence,” stating that racism advances the interests of White elites both materially and psychically. For example, Derrick Bell (1993) states that desegregation of schooling in the United States served White interests more than Blacks because it put forth the US Cold War agenda of support for human rights. As such, White
interests converged with Black interests to afford White people a distinct position of advantage, and as such Bell duly notes that support for racial justice “was not passed completely in good faith” (Khalifa et al., p.492).

The first two tenets of CRT focus on a critical perspective of what appears to be fair equity initiatives within society and institutions. CRT’s mistrust of the motivations behind social justice movements engineered by White elites serves to reframe the gains made by these movements for minorities in a skeptical light by questioning what is really gained at the expense of knowing what is valuably lost. This critical eye of CRT to go so far as to question the obvious serves to inform my research through orienting it’s critical lens upon more nuanced and socially accepted forms of equity to question what is real. This critical lens allows for the research to divulge a potential counter-story to the dominant narrative of equity.

The third tenet of CRT, also known as the idea of “social construction,” declares race as a social construction. Race and races are seen not to correspond to biological or genetic factors, but more toward social thought and social realities (Hartlep, 2009). Society thus serves White interests in inventing and manipulating race as it serves to solidify and promote White power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT describes this idea as “differential racialization” and gives examples of how different races fall in and out of favour in our society based upon White interests at the time. For example, during World War Two, Canadian Japanese citizens fell out of Canadian favour and were relocated to internment camps for the duration of the war. More recently however, the British Columbian government has apologized for placing Japanese citizens in internment camps and have offered a 300 million compensation package to Japanese families. This comes at a time where the B.C. government is eager to secure trade ties with the
Japanese government that would afford a distinct economic advantage toward B.C.’s White interests.

CRT’s notions of differential racialization carry importance for the nature of qualitative research carried out within CRT frameworks. Essential to the notion of differential racialization, “the idea that each race has its own origins and ever evolving history” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p.4), are the realities of intersectionality and anti-essentialism. A race, or a person of a race for that matter, may be many things without having to be a singular identity. For example, a South Asian can be a Liberal or a New Democrat, and/or a single father from a working class family. South Asian’s are not necessarily the stereotypical static community that White elites essentialize them to be. Critical to good research under a CRT framework entails honouring this intersectionality by moving away from universalistic research paradigms that generalize findings to race and move towards relativistic paradigms that “considers research findings to reveal only particular truths which are confined to a single culture, social group, or people” (Hartlep, 2009, p.13). CRT views universalistic research paradigms to be perpetuating White agendas through their generalization of the experiences of the marginalized others in order to legitimize the culturally insensitive actions forwarded by such research findings. As such, my research is confined to the experiences of a particular ethnic group within a particular setting and within particular roles – South Asian administrators within the BCSD. Furthermore, my findings are confined by this CRT tenet and are valid only to this particular group of South Asian administrators. The experiences of South Asian administrators within other districts, or the experiences of other ethnicities in other districts, cannot be ascertained from the findings of this study.
The final tenet of CRT centres on the idea of the *voice* of colour. The “voice of colour” thesis describes the experiences of oppressed minorities as carrying a reality that Whites are unlikely to know about because people of colour carry different histories and experiences with oppression than do White people (Hartlep, 2009). This theme gives the power of authority to oppressed minorities to speak about issues of race and racism over their White counterparts. Having experienced oppression, minorities are ‘in the know’ about issues of race and racism that White people have no concept about from a personal lived experience. CRT describes this revisionist notion of the dominant portrayal of minority experience by Whites as “storytelling” and “counter-storytelling” (Hartlep, 2009, p.10). In the educational context, counter-storytelling serves to revise the dominant idea that schooling experiences for all students are the same because of the neutral nature of schools, and instead accurately describes the differential nature of schooling for marginalized minorities. The voice of colour tenet of CRT is crucial to my research endeavour because my research centres on the search for a counter-story that can only be told, and accurately told, by oppressed minorities themselves. Instead of inquiring about the lived experiences of South Asian administrators within the BCSD from the White elites at the BCSD board offices, I will investigate these stories from the South Asian administrators themselves so that a counter-narrative can be accurately expressed. CRT’s voice of colour tenet is at the core of my research endeavour and is the tool I will use to question the previous dominant narrative of education and the power dynamics at play behind such narratives.

**Critical Race Theory: Counterarguments**

From its roots in law and its progression into education, CRT has been met with strong counterarguments. Litowitz (1997) argues against many of the fundamental tenets of CRT but acknowledges that “CRT is doubtless correct that racism is endemic…[and]…subtle and very
difficult to regulate by law” (p.510). He argues that CRT is misunderstood in its notions of liberalism and is thus improperly critiquing it. He points out that true liberalism centres on individual dignities of fairness and due process and that “…it would seem that CRT should embrace the fundamental tenets of liberalism, especially because liberals have been active supporters of minority rights since the early 1960s” (p.516). Citing Freudian notions of narcissism, he further argues that CRT scholars are entrenched in writing about themselves and “…admit[s] some reservations about the ultimate value of this scholarship” (p.516). He minimizes the intellectual worth of CRT scholarly insights by stating that CRT scholarly work follows a predictable and reproducible format. He goes so far as to say that he is “…not a critical race scholar but [he] could probably produce a manuscript in this vein in a relatively short time by following the standard format” (p.518). Litowitz goes further to minimize the nature of racial discrimination put forth by CRT scholars by stating that it is ironic that CRT scholars self-identify as “outsiders” whilst working as professors at the top law schools (p.526).

Litowitz’s critique of CRT is more argumentative than founded in any rational attempt at valuing scholarship. Firstly, he acknowledges and accepts the most important tenet of CRT that racism is endemic and difficult to combat because of its modern day covert nature. In essence, Litowitz acknowledges the need for CRT scholarship with this admission, but then goes on to argue CRT for the sake of argument. What is most troubling with his argument is his attack of CRT scholars as producing mundane work that follows a prescribed format. Litowitz minimizes the insights of CRT scholars then further questions their outsider status whilst writing from a place of privilege as university professors. It is not ironic to write about the struggles of a people while occupying a place of privilege among academia. Instead, it is this writing that sheds the notion of privilege and replaces it with a notion of representation of voice that CRT so gracefully
values. Further, by arguing that CRT scholars occupy ironic places of privilege as professors of universities begs the question whether Litowitz himself acknowledges the nature of his dual privilege as a White professor in academia, and as such, his oppressive stance on CRT’s voice of colour tenet.

Attacking the very methodology of CRT that lends voice to minorities, Litowitz is adamant that storytelling is a dangerous form of data collection. He argues that from both a legal and political standpoint, storytelling is too general to be useful and can be dangerously interpreted in many ways. He argues that the same narratives can be made to seem more sympathetic to people of colour or simultaneously less sympathetic and thus renders storytelling as “…inherently neutral – neither liberal nor conservative, neither constraining nor freeing” (p.521). Litowitz’s attempt at questioning the nature of storytelling is hypocritical at its core since the value of qualitative research rests on the stories of those who have experienced what is researched. If we are to question the nature of participant stories simply because they are stories of people of colour or stories of racialization, then we bias the entire nature of qualitative research that lends value and insight to the myriad of contexts of the world that stories expose us to. If participant stories were hybrid and shifting in nature, and depended upon the interpretive lens used, then what can be said about the truth behind even the dominant White narrative of our society.

Litowitz’s disillusion with CRT is most highlighted in his claim against the truth of CRT’s central analytical tool of interest convergence. He argues that interest convergence is a strange tool that confuses cause and effect relationships (p.525). For example, he argues that Whites were clearly against affirmative action as they did not benefit from it; further, there is no clear proof that Whites allowed it for their own benefit. Instead, Litowitz views interest
convergence as a tool to manipulate and glamourize the image of minority struggle. He boldly states that “[t]he only effect of the interest-convergence thesis is one of fatalism, to paint a picture of heroic struggle against impossible odds” (p.525). Litowitz’s claim of the lack of proof that White elites benefited from affirmative action is at the core of his erroneous argument against the interest convergence principle. Litowitz’s denial of self-serving White interests in affirmative action is an example of the denial of benefit that White elites often claim, thus affirming CRT’s argument that racism is subtle and covert, and often difficult to argue against.

Other criticisms of CRT have focused on contrasting it with Marxist discourses. Leonardo (2012) argues that Critical Race theorists use race as a central theme but have not fully elaborated, let alone agreed upon, a definition of race. He argues that “[t]his is not merely a problem of definition but about setting conceptual parameters and analytical clarity” (p.431). He purports that with a lack of definitional parameters, analyses of race begin to lack clarity and erroneously overlap race as class. He puts forth a Critical Raceclass Theory of Education as a remedy to CRT’s lack of analysis of the cocentral theme of class, and argues that CRT lacks discussion of intersectionality by focusing on interpreting variables such as class from solely a racialized perspective. He describes CRT analyses of intersectionality as “…a bit like looking to the side of a dim star in order actually to see it more clearly because looking directly at it fails to register the faint light” (p.430). However, Leonardo fails to understand that CRT’s focus on race as a central theme is done in an attempt to highlight the most salient feature of an intersectional analysis. Further, CRT focuses on race because of its prominence of influence and effect upon the experiences of those studied.

the racialized landscape of education over conventional forms of antiracism because CRT has an activist dimension lacking in most forms of antiracism (p.6). He asserts that CRT affords a radical approach that contrasts the mundane reformist nature of antiracism and its rhetorical multicultural initiatives. He argues that educational policy is rife with racist and discriminatory practices that “…operate beneath a veneer of professed tolerance and diversity” (p.1), and that CRT is best suited to elucidate the vexed bond between policy and racial power.

Gillborn (2006) describes CRT’s approach to racism as far more complex than Leonardo (2012) purports. In fact, arguing against White notions of the simplicity of racism, Gillborn expresses great trepidation about over simplifying racism and what defines it (p.4). He further describes CRT’s attack on liberalism as founded in an understanding of racism as covert and wide ranging and highlighting the frustration with legal discourse in only addressing racism if it is overt and crude (p.10). This clarification of CRT’s attack on liberalism clearly refutes Litowitz’s (1997) claim that CRT is misunderstood in its notions of liberalism and thus incorrectly attacks it on a wide scale. Furthermore, Gillborn (2006) addresses claims by scholars that CRT attacks affirmative action initiatives such as meritocracy and colour-blindness to the contradiction of its own tenets. He clarifies for detractors of CRT that the notions of meritocracy and colour-blindness have race based effects that are used as a mechanism by powerful White elites to lend the façade of equal opportunity when in fact such notions only serve to maintain the status quo of power structures held by these same White elites. Hartlep (2009) furthers Gillborn’s argument by arguing that colour-blindness “legitimizes racism’s need for an ‘other’ in order to flourish” (p.7) and that meritocracy is only another form of control by White elites that allow for their abundant power to be portioned out at their liberty ensuring the maintenance of the advantaged status quo they have been afforded through racism itself.
It is important to note that Gilborn’s (2006) elucidation of race clearly refutes all of Litowitz’s claims against CRT’s misunderstood notion of liberalism. Gilborn further places the discussion of race as cocentral to CRT within the arguments of a lack of complexity of analysis put forth by Leonardo. It is evident that CRT rests upon clearly defined notions of race as the central and defining focus of any analyses done on the racialization of experiences of people of colour. The weighty notion of race supersedes an intersectional analysis because of the crucial and defining nature that race plays in the interactions between White elites and people of colour.

Gillborn (2009) addresses claims by CRT detractors using Marxist discourses to invalidate CRT tenets by stating that “there is a strand of reductionist Marxist analysis that has generated critiques of CRT characterized by over-simplification, misunderstandings and misrepresentations of the approach” (p.125). He points out that Marx and his ideologies are far more complex than is made evident by scholars who use his work to discredit CRT (p.128). Gillborn implies that CRT shows great symmetry to Marxist thought but that this is only made apparent through an honest engagement and good understanding of not only the fundamentals of Marxist discourse, but also those of CRT.

Cole (2009) agrees with Litowitz (1997) that CRT’s notion of interest convergence is flawed. Cole also voices his frustration at the racialized centre of CRT theory by arguing that CRT scholars should replace the concept of ‘race’ with that of ‘White supremacy’ (p.115) since CRT scholars use the concept of White supremacy so often. Gillborn (2009) argues that Cole is caricaturizing CRT’s concept of race and through his sensationalizing has intentionally misunderstood the concept of race to serve his own interests and argues that Cole’s notion of race discussions as White supremacy is “…just plain wrong and obviously so” (Gillborn, 2009, p.129). Although Cole refutes any validity to the notion of interest convergence, his caricature
of race as White supremacy is undoubtedly a self-serving notion that supports the claim of interest convergence – he exemplifies the very behavior he says does not exist. Gillborn (2009) explains that although all Whites are not active in relations involving interest convergence and benefit differently from person to person, but “…they do all benefit, whether they like it or not” (Gillborn, 2008, p.34). As such, Litowitz’s (1997) claim of a lack of proof that Whites benefited from affirmative action, as outlined by Gillborn (2008), is clearly against the grain of truth.

Cole (2009) emphatically agrees with Leonardo (2012) that CRT fails as a theory when it asserts the pre-eminence of race over class. Cole (2009) argues for a Marxist approach to racism that would rectify CRT’s confusion and allow for an intersectional analysis of both race and class. He argues that there are multiple forms of racism and that CRT simplifies racism into a dyadic construct between Blacks and Whites. Cole (2009) defines racism in very broad terms taking into account “…non-colour-coded as well as colour-coded racism…” and refutes claims that his description of racism is class-reductionist. Ironically, Cole’s broad notion of racism would lend itself invaluable as a definition of race was it to be useful for an intersectional analysis of race and class. Cole reduces racism’s colour dependency to a non sequitur through a categorization of race as independent of colour dynamics.

Gillborn (2005, 2009, 2010) has explained CRT’s notion of class analysis as embedded in racial discourse. Gillborn (2010) lends an ear to Marxist thoughts around racism but describes CRT’s concept of racism as addressing the larger picture of racial encounters to which class based analyses have no relevance. Gillborn (2009) argues that the notion of racism put forth by Cole (2009), especially his all-encompassing definition of it, reduces all analyses down to class and ultimately brings the larger picture of racial encounters into the background.
Hill (2009) argues education requires a more in-depth analysis and that Gillborn (2009) and other CRT scholars “…downplay social class factors in educational and social alienation” (Hill, 2009, p.3). Although Hill acknowledges the pervasiveness of racism, he argues that Gillborn views it through a lens that lends more importance to race than class. Hill argues for an intersectional analysis and “…a notion of ‘raced’ and gendered class…” (p.24), and contends that Gillborn (2009) views social class as raced and gendered but refuses to see that race is gendered and classed. Hill echoes Leondardo (2012) and Cole (2009) by arguing that Gillborn (2009) and other CRT scholars prioritize the issue of race over class analyses in stark contrast to Marxist views. Hill further purports that CRT’s focus on race is more about White supremacy, and such a notion should be replaced instead with a discussion of capitalism not White supremacy because it is capitalist notions that are central to the discriminations that CRT erroneously centred on race (and inherently White supremacy). In the vein of many CRT detractors, Hill refutes the focus of CRT upon race as a fundamental flaw of CRT. Yet, Hill fails to acknowledge that CRT’s reductionist approach lends clear focus to the variable of race upon the contexts of the racialized, and that discussions of capitalist notions over race based analyses serve only to tangentialize and distract researchers from the salient variable of race within intersectional analyses.

Gillborn (2010) contends that CRT’s centrality of race is not a fundamentalist approach that neglects the intersectionality of race and class. He contends that orthodox Marxism dissolves race into class relations (p.80) and argues that “…it is as if racist inequity (which impacts on minoritized groups from birth to death) is some sort of chimera, a kind of ideological trick of the light by which things that look like race inequity are actually reducible to class” (Gillborn, 2010, p.80). He contends that Hill (2009) misrepresents CRT’s notion of race and
White supremacy. Gillborn points out that any interrogation of Whiteness requires critical discourse (p.81) and that CRT scholars use White supremacy in contrast to its historical usages. In this manner, CRT defines White supremacy as the subtle and often hidden actions of Whites that dominate the policies that shape the world of inequity for minoritized groups (p.84). Gillborn (2010) retorts that “[w]ithin CRT, therefore, White supremacy is a complex and nuanced phenomenon” (p.84). As such, it is clear that CRT’s notion of White supremacy is not similar to the definitions put forth by Litowitz (1997), Cole (2009), or Hill (2009).

Gillborn (2010) retorts Hill’s (2009) claim that CRT, as an educational theory, falls short of an intersectional analysis of race and class. Gillborn argues that CRT’s interest convergence principle “…is centrally about an intersectional analysis of race/class interests” (p.85). He argues that CRT’s interest convergence is rooted in a contextual analysis of race and class politics, both contemporary and historic (p.85). He argues that racial injustices are never handed out, but won through demonstrations and the voices of those minoritized. When it becomes inconvenient to ignore the voices, elite Whites find it more convenient to give way to change that empowers minorities. This serves the interest of the elite Whites because it silences voices, gives the appearance of justice, and most importantly levels the weight and cost of such change upon the middle and lower classes. Delgado (2007) aptly describes interest convergence as an intersectional tool that “…explains the twists and turns of blacks’ fortunes in terms of class interests of elite whites” (p.345). As such, CRT’s ability to focus on racism as endemic to people of colour alongside an interest convergence analysis lends weight to CRT’s strength as a theory in focussing on the salient features of race whilst entrenched in an intersectional analysis through the interest convergence principle.
Solórzano and Yosso (2002) also refute Hill’s (2009) claim that CRT lacks an intersectional analysis of race and class. They argue that interest convergence is not a unitary analysis, but rather a transdisciplinary perspective that “…challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most analyses and insists on analyzing race and racism by placing them in both historical and contemporary contexts” (p.26). Further, they describe CRT methodology as drawing upon multiple disciplines to elucidate the effects of racism, sexism, and classism which makes CRT best suited for studying the inequities within education (p.27). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) argue that Litowitz’s (1997) claim against CRT’s storytelling as inherently neutral is incorrect. They argue that much of social science theoretical models support majoritarian stories, and that CRT’s focus on storytelling lends voice to minorities and their experiences (p.30). They describe educational research as lacking theories of social transformation that seek to remedy injustices by focusing on racial inequities expressed through the stories of the minoritized (p.36). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) express the dire need for stories in education by questioning “[w]hose stories are privileged in educational contexts and whose stories are distorted and silenced?” (p.36). They believe CRT is a critical theory for social transformation in education.

CRT’s critical lens on race is important for my research and better serves as a theory of analysis for the counter-stories of my research participants than other intersectional analyses put forth by CRT detractors. Although CRT focuses on race as the most salient feature of analysis, it does not do so at the expense of an intersectional analysis because of its interest convergence principle. Further, it is important to note that although CRT discusses issues of Whiteness and elite White interests, and occasionally White supremacy, it does not do so to essentialize all White people. Rather, through an analysis of race as determined by elite White interests, CRT
serves to intersect race with class and achieve a nuanced level of intersectionality while highlighting the prominence of race within discussions of the experiences of people of colour. CRT’s focus on countering notions of race and racism within the dominant White narrative through counter-storytelling by racialized peoples parallels my research into the lived experiences of South Asian administrators within the BCSD as it relates to their racialized experiences. However, it is important to note that in the vein of CRT, I do not wish to essentialize Whiteness in any way through my research. The focus of my discussions around Whiteness is centred primarily on elite White interests that oppress the experiences of people of colour. This is not a discussion that pertains to all White people. Further, it is important to note that the findings of my research are in no way meant to pertain to all White people nor to essentialize White ideologies around topics discussed and discovered in this research endeavour.

CRT serves as a critical theoretical framework focussing on issues of race, racism, and the racialized experiences of people of colour/minorities. As such, CRT serves as an appropriate critical lens upon which to view my research study. CRT faces many counterarguments centring on notions of a lack of intersectionality of race with gender and class, reverse racism against White elites, and a misguided notion of liberalism. However, it is clear that CRT neither prescribes to notions of reverse racism nor perpetuates it through an erroneous critical lens that replaces race with gender or class issues. Instead, CRT attends elegantly to the notion of race, racism, and power within the hegemonic dominant narrative of academia.

**Critical Race Theory: Education**

In a seminal paper introducing CRT within the field of education (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995), Ladson-Billings and Tate describe the necessity for a critical theory in education that addresses the specific issues of race irrespective of gender and class (p.49). The authors
argue that race “…unlike gender and class, remains untheorized.” (p.49). Although they recognize the importance for class and gender based analyses, they point out the insidious shortcomings such analyses have in regards to race. However, Dei (1995a) points to the importance of an “integrative anti-racism” approach as not solely founded on race but integrative in considering the intersections between race, gender and class (p.11). Dei (1999) explains that in order “to promote educational change through anti-racism practice, it is crucial for critical writings to interrupt the complacency of conventional educational discourse” (p.395). As such, integrative anti-racism serves to put into action many of the findings of CRT scholars around issues of race and racism. Whereas CRT elucidates the racialized experiences of people of colour, an integrative anti-racism framework serves to practically implement such findings within the contexts of gender and class in race.

Since these seminal papers, many scholars have built on the ideas of CRT put forth by Ladson-Billings and Tate to further the scope of the theory’s relevance to education and anti-racist praxis, and have further elaborated on the tenets of CRT specific to the field of education (Cole, 2012; Dixon & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2012).

Khalifa, Dunbar & Douglasb (2013) emphatically point out the lack of critical theory in educational leadership research (p.490). They argue that CRT would bridge the behavioural gap between school and society by informing present day leadership theory that continues to standardize leadership behaviours for all students that are centred on colour-blind approaches which enhance inequities for minority students within schools (p.490). Khalifa et. al. argue that “CRT scholarship stands to contribute greatly to the field of educational leadership because it directly challenges the ubiquitous claims of the colorblind neutrality assumed in data-driven decision-making” (p.491). Lopez (2003) describes this contribution as a necessary responsibility
for all scholars who contribute literature to educational leadership programs, and agrees that conversations around race have been neglected from the literature (p.86). Howard (2010) describes the ideology and culture of education as reflective of White, middle-class standards. Khalifa et. al. (2013) describe the necessity for CRT research into the lived experiences of minorities with racism to help recontextualize the landscape of White power in education.

Addressing the needs for CRT scholarship in education, and particularly into the lived experiences of minorities, my research further elucidated the racialized landscape of education for South Asian administrators and students. My research has added to the scholarship of CRT, but also serves to uniquely situate such discussions within the Canadian educational landscape. The need for CRT research within leadership further highlighted the value of my investigation.

Drawing upon the work of key CRT scholars, I used a CRT framework similar to Kohli (2014), Gillborn (2006), and Chadderton (2013). The following five tenets of CRT guided my research: (a) race and racism as central to analysis, (b) racism as deeply engrained in society, (c) commitment to social justice, (d) challenge to the dominant perspective, and (e) racism in context [social, historical, and political]. I used the following CRT analytical tools to guide my analyses of research data: (a) racism as endemic to people of colour, (b) the interest-convergence principle, (c) the social construction of race through the principle of differential racialization, and (d) the voice of colour principle that outlines the experiences of minorities that are unknown to Whites. Further, as Gillborn (2006) outlines, I used the conceptual tool of storytelling to capture these five tenets. Importantly, the CRT framework used within the education context departs dramatically from its legal counterpart used in critical legal studies (CLS) by employing storytelling to capture the shared history of participants who have experienced racism (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p.301). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), in their original seminal paper, explain
that “the ‘voice’ component of critical race theory provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step on the road to justice” (p.58). Dixon and Rousseau (2005) further explain that ‘voice’ does not imply a singular story or account, rather the stories are different but the experience of racism is common as manifest in the shared ‘voice’ (p.11). They go on to further explain the function of this ‘voice’ as “provid[ing] a ‘counterstory’ – a means to counteract or challenge the dominant story” (p.11). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) put forth the importance of this ‘voice’ in the form of stories from participants who have experienced racism within education and explain that “…without authentic voices of people of colour (as teachers, parents, administrators, students, and community members) it is doubtful that we can say or know anything useful about education in their communities” (p. 58).
Chapter Four: Research Methods

Terminology

For the purposes of this study South Asian was used synonymously with Indo-Canadian. South Asian students/administrators were minority students/administrators from “various religions and nationalities who trace their cultural origins to the Indian subcontinent….South Asian countries of origin consist primarily of Pakistan, India, Nepal, Kashmir, Burma, Sri Lanka, and Fiji” (Shariff, 2009, p.35).

Researcher Reflexivity and Insider Positionality

An important artefact of my research design was the concept of insider positionality – when researcher and participants share cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The complexities that shared ethnicity brought to my research are important to elucidate. Since I conducted interviews of South Asian administrators, being from the same ethnic background may have given rise to certain biases in data interpretation and collection that are alluded to in the literature. However, my background also provided insights/insider information of which other non-South Asian researchers might not have been aware.

In a joint venture between the educational and anthropological disciplines, Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) argue that insider positionality is an advantage because it affords unique “funds of knowledge for teaching” (p.134). They argue that a qualitative approach exploring issues related to the ethnic background of the researcher give rise to more accurate data than would be possible for an outsider (when researcher and participants do not share cultural and ethnic backgrounds). It appears that sharing common traits with research participants, and in this particular case it is ethnicity, would allow for the researcher to be
exposed to unique knowledge that might otherwise elude him/her if a shared ethnic background was not present.

Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Ntseane, and Muhamad (2001) disagree with Moll et al. stating that the boundaries between insider and outsider are so dynamic and constantly in flux that an evaluation of advantage to one position over the other is impossible. Furthermore, they state that there are distinct limits to insider positionality. They argue that the limits are defined by positionality, power, and representation. Firstly, they argue that positionality is a problem since the researcher’s position within the culture can change. What they fail to acknowledge is that the researcher, if truly part of that culture, will undoubtedly change with it. Secondly, they argue that power is inherent in all research and that insiders have no greater power to gain insight than any outsider might. However, this explanation is more along the lines of colour-blindness which assumes that despite one’s ethnicity, all researchers look and act the same. Thirdly, they argue that representation of data as truth is also the struggle of the outsider since the “outsider [can] see things not evident to insiders, and render a more objective portrayal of the reality under study” (p.414). However, Merriam et al. fail to acknowledge that research is not simply conducted for objective data collection; rather, good research renders insightful data that affords unique and relevant interpretations.

Arguing from strictly an anthropological perspective, Narayan (1993) agrees with Merriam et al. stating that the constantly fluctuating boundary of researcher as insider/outsider is an “enactment of hybridity” (p.672). She questions whether insider positionality is a real construct at all, and claims that all researchers are insiders since research is conducted for scholarly work in a real world (p.671). Researchers belong to the scholarly world in which their reports are disseminated, whilst also existing in the real world where their data is collected.
Narayan pointedly argues that the concept of insider in research is a remnant of colonial thinking and needs to change since many scholars are now of colour. However, Narayan’s simplification of insiderness as simply belonging to academia overlooks the inherent difference of interpretation that culture and ethnicity can bring to the research endeavour. To say that research is conducted for scholarly work independent of biases associated with race and ethnicity serves to paint the real world with a singular brush that overlooks the importance that difference affords to the research endeavour.

The debate whether insider/outsider positionality is a real construct or not is relatively new to the research literature. There is an abundance of literature, however, that addresses the advantages and disadvantages of insider positionality.

Labaree (2002) states that insiders claim greater access to relevant data (p.99). She outlines four broad advantages of insiderness as value constructs: “the value of shared experiences; the value of greater access; the value of cultural interpretation; and the value of deeper understanding and clarity of thought for the researcher” (p.103). Conversely, Sherif (2001) outlines three major disadvantages to insiderness: (a) insider status can cause an asymmetrical power relationship between researcher and participant, (b) insider status can cause the researcher dissonance in the form of constant negotiation between conflicting identities, and (c) insider status can cause marginalization of the researcher. Chavez (2008) echoes Sherif’s claims stating that the challenge of insider status is “negotiating the tenuousness of subject-object position or the unpredictable shifting of [researcher] identities” (p.490). It is important to note that Labaree, Chavez, and Sherif agree upon the unique position of researcher as insider; however, they disagree upon the limitations or possibilities that such a position renders. If a researcher were to successfully navigate the advantages alluded to by Labaree and garner
potentially more meaningful data than an outsider, then such a researcher must have undoubtedly attended to the challenges of the shifting nature of insiderness alluded to by Chavez and Sherif. As such, a successful negotiation of such challenges is inherent to the researcher’s natural inclination towards ridding the researcher-participant interaction of any undue influences.

Mori (2012) explored the nature of insider positionality by examining the co-construction of interviewee narratives that depended upon shared membership to a cultural group. He found that interviewee’s constructed different narratives depending upon whether they shared cultural affiliation with the interviewer. Mori argues that insider positionality for the interviewer affords co-construction of narratives with the interviewee that more accurately captures the interviewee’s story through a process whereby “[t]he relational identities of the interviewers and the interviewee and their relevant life histories influence the designs of the interviewers’ questions and uptakes, and ultimately the resulting narratives” (p.502). It is clear that a shared cultural background influences interview data outcomes that appear to provide data with greater depth and narratives that are potentially closer to the lived realities of interviewees.

Haniff (1985) argues that shared cultural affiliation between interviewer-interviewee allows for distinct levels of interpretation. For instance, Haniff argues that culture based cues are more prevalent in interviews involving shared cultural affiliation; furthermore, insiderness allows for greater clarity of interpretation of these cues within the context of interviews and affords a greater base of knowledge. In addition, Haniff noted in her study of Caribbean women that insider positionality allowed for interviewers to create tension-free rapport which added to the interviewer’s legitimacy in the eyes of participants. Labaree (2002) extends Haniff’s insights by noting that interpretation of such cultural cues by the interviewer can help open up interviews to distinct culture-based forms of communication such as native language terminology and non-
verbal cultural gestures (p.105). Mori (2012) describes the importance of insiderness by acknowledging how a lack of shared cultural affiliation between interviewer and interviewee gives rise to an interaction lacking the depth of knowledge base that shared cultural affiliation between interviewer and interviewee affords because “both the interviewers and the interviewee engage in an ongoing analysis of each other’s conduct, which is also influenced by their perceived, demonstrated, and claimed membership in different ethnic and cultural groups” (p.502). Mori argues that the dynamic of shared cultural affiliation orients the interviewee toward a particular topic with a cultural and ethnic lens in mind that affords more nuanced forms of knowledge (p.503). It is clear that the interview dynamics between interviewer and interviewee are starkly influenced by shared cultural backgrounds which potentially afford more nuanced data that would otherwise go unfound – and ultimately uninterpreted – without the culture-specific lens of the interviewer.

The literature on insider status clearly points to an advantage for researchers who share ethnicity with their participants; however, it warns of the perils that exist if the researcher is not reflexive in negotiating the boundaries between researcher and those researched. Furthermore, insider status is an advantage when using interviews to gather data because it gives rise to instant rapport between interviewee and interviewer which is critical to establishing a trusting relationship which will garner deeper and more nuanced data.

In my study of the lived experiences of South Asian administrators, this literature lends two important insights. Firstly, my shared cultural and ethnic affiliation with participants will require me to be reflexive to issues of power and dynamics within the interview structure so as to maintain an authentic rapport with interviewees pinned to a static and unshifting identity as researcher within the cultural and ethnic membership of being South Asian. Secondly, my
shared cultural affiliation with participants should be used ethically to afford more nuanced forms of data and data analysis through research using a critical lens that is sensitive to cultural forms of knowledge such as same language use or cultural cues. In my study, a shared cultural affiliation will potentially serve to create greater comfort around the topic of race and racialized experiences because my membership within the culture will potentially entail greater rapport with interviewees who see me as having experiences at least some of the same themes of the counter-story of race that they themselves have experienced. Within a CRT framework focussing on elucidating the counter-narrative of participants, an insider position as researcher can only serve to potentially benefit the research endeavour if the interviews are prefaced by the researcher with an understanding of shared experience with the counter-story.

Methodology

Kvale (1983) describes the utility of the qualitative research interview in capturing the ‘voice’ of participants. Discrediting the counterarguments of scholars that question the validity and accuracy of participant accounts within the qualitative interview, and essentially the ‘truths’ behind participant stories, Kvale (1992) declares the qualitative interview a sound research method within qualitative research. As such, qualitative interviews are a useful tool for capturing the ‘voice’ and ‘truths’ of participants within the CRT framework I used for this research. However, the literature on qualitative interviews presents many critiques associated with their utility within modern research paradigms, the validity of the data collected, the ethical challenges associated with their delivery, and their use/misuse by inexperienced researchers.

Kvale (1992) problematizes the six main critiques of qualitative interviews: they are not scientific, they are not objective, they are not trustworthy, they are not reliable, they are not intersubjective, and they are not quantitative. Kvale (1992) argues that the scientific status of the
qualitative research interview depends upon the definition of science itself, and that essentially “[s]cience becomes the creative search to understand better, and it uses whatever approaches are responsive to the particular questions and subject matters addressed” (p.6). Arguing that the very notion of objectivity is subjective, Kvale (1992) concludes that qualitative research cannot be labelled as lacking objectivity. He also argues that the trustworthiness of qualitative interviews is entrenched in notions of reliability and intersubjectivity. Some have argued that qualitative interviews use leading questions and entrench bias into the research process giving rise to unreliable data. However, Kvale (1992) argues that leading questions can be beneficial in giving rise to data that might otherwise remain hidden to the researcher. He argues that the problem is not with the use of leading questions, but rather with their overuse (p.11). As such the only issue that some might consider problematic with regard to trustworthiness of qualitative interviews lies in the notion of intersubjectivity and how many have claimed that qualitative interview research data is often interpreted in many different ways and is therefore unreliable. Kvale (1992) argues that “[w]ith an explication of the fundamental perspectives adopted towards an interview text and a specification of the researchers’ questions to an interview passage, several interpretations of the same text will not be a weakness but a richness and a strength of interview research” (p.13). As such, it is clear that the multiplicity of interpretations that the qualitative interview affords is an asset to its design and not a deficit. Lastly, many researchers have argued that the lack of quantitative data generated through interviews renders qualitative research unscientific. Apart from pointing out that quantitative and qualitative approaches interact because qualitative interview data can be quantified very easily and rendered amenable to statistical analysis, Kvale (1992) argues that the interpretation of quantitative data is ironically a qualitative endeavour itself (p.17).
Most importantly for my research, qualitative interviews within a CRT framework are often considered crucial for uncovering the voice of the oppressed. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) purport that “it is through the connection of many ‘truths’ that interview research contributes to our knowledge of the meaning of the human experience” (p.316) and thus link the interview method to the critical notion of participant ‘voice’ outlined in CRT. They examined less structured interviews and discovered that the benefit of having limited structure in the interview process allowed for the interview to have less to do with drawing knowledge from an interviewee and more to do with the co-construction of knowledge between interviewer-interviewee who became involved in a process of joint meaning making (p.314). This process of joint meaning making is most pronounced in semi-structured interviews as personal and social matters are discussed in more depth than other forms of interviews (p.319). DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree argue that semi-structured interviews contain an important iterative component whereby “preliminary data analysis coincides with data collection often result[ing] in altering questions as the investigators learn more about the subject” (p.316). Furthermore, they argue that semi-structured interviews allow for important digressions whereby the interviewee’s interests and knowledge are honoured which can give rise to important information that would otherwise remain hidden. It is clear that the ability of the interviewer to follow the topic of discussion deeper without being restricted to a set list of questions and topics allows for semi-structured interviews to garner meaningful, and potentially hidden, data. Most important for my research study is the ability of the semi-structured interview format to allow for the possibility of deeper hidden information to be uncovered. Since the counter-story I am looking for under a CRT framework requires an unrestricted and unguided interview format to allow for the voice of participants to unfold through the sharing of the hidden counter-story, semi-structured interviews
serve well for my research endeavour. Semi-structured interviews will allow for me to guide the topics of the interview just enough to allow for a space for the voice of a counter-story to unfold.

DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) argue that the challenges of developing rapport with interviewees, which is essential to uncovering information, is oftentimes traversed very quickly in situations where the interviewer shares culture and ethnicity with the interviewee because shared cultural affiliation gives rise to interviewer-interviewee trust very quickly into the interview process. This trust might be an artefact of a deeper understanding by the interviewee that their shared cultural affiliation might mean a greater possibility that the research at hand carries equal risk for both interviewer and interviewee. This is significant since the ethical quality of interview data is a measure of the shared risk of both interviewer and interviewee (Klockars, 1977, p.210). Developing this instant rapport with South Asian administrators within my study will be an important artefact of the ease with which the potential counter-story of their narratives might unfold. As Klockars alludes to, my shared culture and ethnicity with the administrators might serve to ease any reservations they may have with sharing their counter-story since they may presume that the risk of sharing their story is equal to risks I may face as a South Asian researcher disseminating the results of study of their stories.

But the interview method is not without its shortcomings (Kvale, 1996; Nunkoosing, 2005). Kvale (2006) and Anyan (2013) both acknowledge the power dominance created by interview methodology and implore researchers to recognize the power dynamics at play in the co-construction of knowledge within interviews. Kvale (2006) purports that because of issues of power within interviews, it “is necessary to ascertain objectivity and ethicality of interview research” (p.480). Butterfield et al. (2009) describe this power dynamic and its impact on how participants viewed their experiences after the interview. They state that “participants viewed
their situations more positively at the end of the interview than at the beginning” (p.126). As such, it is clear from the work of Butterfield et al. and others that the interview process has potential unforeseen affects upon participants. The influence of interviewer upon interviewee could therefore present unforeseen affects upon participants without the intention of the interviewer. Yet, Corbin and Morse (2003) adamantly describe the qualitative interview as no more harmful to participants than everyday life (p.335), and temper any negative effects of the power dynamics within qualitative interviews by declaring that interviews about sensitive topics benefit both the interviewer and interviewee (p.338). Kvale (2006) further claims that the power asymmetry of interviews can be limited if the researcher is transparent with the investigation method as well as the goals of the research with the interviewee (p.496). As such, these challenges do not detract from the utility of interviews as a research tool that garners valuable data. After many experiences with qualitative interview research, Smith (2005) is adamant that the power asymmetries of interview research do not render erroneous data (p.644). It is clear that if the researcher exercises vigour in ethicality and reflexivity, the power dynamics involved in qualitative interviews can garner valid data that carries the depth of participant experiences and is not solely an artefact or reflection of interviewer influence. Although it may be perceived that my position as a teacher interviewing administrators may not create a power dynamic within the interview process itself since administrators have a sense of positional authority over me, my shared ethnicity with South Asian administrators and the notion of someone providing a forum for their counter-voice to finally be heard might lead to a power shift towards researcher. By providing a forum for participant counter-voices, the ethicality of preventing harm will lie in my ability to acknowledge the depth of harm such sharing of stories might create for participants post-interview. It will be important for me to be reflexive of power asymmetries created in
moments where a counter-story is being shared, and to attend to the ethicality of such a situation as alluded to by Butterfield et al.

White and Hoskins (2012) warn of the perils for new qualitative researchers engaged in qualitative interviews and argue that graduate students face specific challenges with qualitative interviews that are a product of their inexperience. They argue that graduate students often face many challenges surrounding the complex nature of interviewing which requires students to be spontaneous, in the moment, and engaged long enough to follow participant experiences (p.180). In addition, the interplay of interviewer and interviewee requires a deep engagement that challenges graduate students to be connected while objective at the same time. White and Hoskins have noticed a propensity for graduate students to create barriers between themselves and participants because of their fixation and unnatural infatuation with theory. They describe this barrier as most prevalent when “[a]ll other possibilities (listening for the unexpected, being surprised, being openly curious, etc.) can fall by the wayside when theory dominates the interaction” (p.182). Perhaps this skewed interpretation by inexperienced interviewers is a result of the asymmetrical power relationship between interviewer and interviewee and is a natural consequence of the inevitable power dynamics at play. Kvale (2006) further reasons that the qualitative interview is “a tool which reflects an indirect conversation with a monopoly of interpretation by the interviewer” (p.483). However, White and Hoskins fail to acknowledge that the influence of power asymmetry on interviews and their subsequent interpretation is not just limited to the inexperienced researcher since many experienced qualitative interviewers struggle with the same issue. Furthermore, the issue of the influence of power asymmetry has more to do with embedding bias within the data – at the point of gathering data as in interview questions and at the point of data analysis – which is controlled through researcher ethicality and reflexivity.
and has less to do with the untenable influence of power asymmetry. Nonetheless, it will be important for my research endeavour to reflect upon the impact inexperience with interviews and their analysis might play in the garnering of meaningful data. It is important to note that the counter-story I am seeking to elucidate within a CRT framework will require an interviewing skill that overcomes many of the problems alluded to by White and Hoskins that inexperience can render.

Roulston, deMarrais, and Lewis (2003) further outline the pitfalls of inexperienced interviewers such as graduate students. Roulston et. al. (2003) claim that novice interviewers often neglect how their assumptions about participant realities influence the flow of conversations within the interview (p.650). This causes an unbalanced interview reflective of a theory-bound orientation alluded to by White and Hoskins (2012). In addition, Roulston et. al. (2003) claim novice interviewers face challenges around sensitive topics. They argue that the inexperience of novice interviewers around sensitive topics can often cause unanticipated emotions to both interviewer and interviewee that inevitably affect questions within the interview and arguably the interview data itself. However, Kvale (2006) points out the need to focus less on the encounter with sensitive topics and more on the notion that interviewer success in getting participants to disclose personal, and otherwise private, information may lead to interviewee regret over what was said. Kvale (2006) argues that in sensitive situations, “a quasi-therapeutic interviewer role” (p.482) can lead to interviewee regret requiring careful negotiation on the part of the interviewer. Although Roulston et. al. (2003) and Kvale (2006) make important points, sensitive topics are difficult to traverse for even the most experienced of qualitative interviewers and can often influence the flow of conversations in a positive way that affords deeper and more relevant data. In addition, with care towards ethicality and reflexivity, any interviewer
assumptions about interviewees can be negotiated with ease and an uncoupling from theory-bound orientations.

The rich literature on qualitative interviews allowed me to understand that semi-structured qualitative interviews would be the most meaningful research tool for my study which aims to provide a space for marginalized voices to be heard. My research, within a CRT framework, focusses on the voices of participants as rendering a counter-story against the dominant narrative. As such, an interview structure that allows for the voice and story of participants to be heard is most valuable to my research. It is clear that semi-structured interviews are a useful data collection method for collecting the story (and ‘voice’) of participants within a CRT framework because semi-structured interviews lend a less rigid framework to interviewing which allows for participant stories to unfold through the flexibility afforded the interviewer. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allow for any potential benefits of insider positionality to afford more nuanced forms of data related to participant counter-stories to easily unfold given their less rigid structure and natural orientation towards story-telling. Nunkoosing (2005) describes the interview as an important method for research participants to think and talk about their life experiences (p.699) which is valuable for data collection, and in particular data collection associated with the counter-story of CRT. Despite its shortcomings, Kvale (2006) describes interviews as a research tool that “…may contribute to the empowerment of the oppressed” (p.497) and lends weight to their use within CRT research since empowering participants adds to the activist dimension important to CRT. This qualitative research tool has its shortcomings but does not fall short in depth of data when compared to more quantitative methods. However, it is clear that the power dynamics created within interviews can create biased stories based on the inexperienced questioning of researchers and their propensity
to fit data into their robust theory-bound notions of the realities they are researching, and
oftentimes assume to already know. As such, it will be important to exercise researcher
ethicality and reflexivity within my study to ensure my assumptions do not influence the truth
behind the realities being told in interviews. Nonetheless, with an eye on ethicality and insider
reflexivity, the interviewer can unshackle his/her theory-bound notions of interpretation and
allow for the many iterations of data analysis to hold him/her responsible to the data at hand.
Kvale (2006) explains “that recognition of power dynamics by the social construction of
knowledge in interviews is necessary to ascertain objectivity and ethicality of interview
research” (p.480).

Since it was important to realize the counter-stories and voice of participants within a
CRT framework and to gain data on the lived realities of South Asian administrators, this study
was informed by a qualitative research design which involved interviewing seven BCSD
administrators. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1983, 1992,
1996) to allow for interviewer flexibility to gain a depth of data that accurately reflected the
nature of the sensitive topics at hand. The focus was to go deeper into the stories of
administrators in order to lend ‘voice’ to their ‘truths’ and elucidate a potential counter-story of
their experiences within educational structures in B.C. (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995;
DiCocci-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Semi-structured interviews were useful in rendering the counter-story of my research
participants. I structured interviews around the three major research questions, but allowed for
participants to share their answers in more informal ways that highlighted story-telling. I was
flexible in my interviews, allowing for more salient topics to be questioned and delved into by
participants without restrictions. This structure allowed for a guided story-telling to take place
where participants answered questions through examples and stories that related back to the semi-structure nature of the interview. Most importantly, the semi-structured interview format allowed me to create instant rapport with participants through the fluid and non-restrictive nature of dialogue within a semi-structured analysis. The product of this two-fold advantage of a less rigid interview structure that only served to guide discussion and the instant rapport created by such a lack of structure allowed for the counter-story of CRT to unfold as it related to the lived experiences of South Asian administrators within the BCSD. However, the greatest disadvantage to such an approach was that those participants most reluctant to share their counter-story often waited until the end of the interview to share their experiences with racism. As such, the fluid nature of the semi-structured interview not only allowed for the counter-story to come forth, but also remain hidden.

Site of Study

The setting for the research study was 7 secondary schools located within the BCSD. The BCSD is a diverse school system that enrolls approximately 54,000 students from Kindergarten (K) to grade 12. 25% of these students are designated ESL and 60% of all students speak a language other than English at home with over 126 languages having been identified within schools.

The secondary school setting was the most suitable for this study because there were very few South Asian administrators at the elementary school level in this district. Since I am employed as a secondary school teacher within British Columbia, secondary schools were a suitable choice for research because they were convenient to access as well as being a context I knew well.
All participants were recruited by researching the names of principals and vice-principals from a list of administrators on the BCSD website and cross referencing these names with names provided by participants through a snowball recruitment technique. All participants were recruited by sending an Initial Letter of Contact to one or two South Asian administrators within the BCSD that I knew, followed by sending an Initial Letter of Contact to all South Asian Administrators within the BCSD that were identified by one of my initial two administrators. The final participants were selected based on their self-identification as South Asian principals or vice-principals, no criterion of years of experience was used.

**Recruitment Procedure**

For this study I sought participants who self-identified as South Asian and were either principals or vice-principals of secondary schools within the BCSD. Additionally, I sought participants who ranged in age and years of experience working in an administrative position. Using purposeful and snowball sampling (Bogden & Biklen, 1998; Maxwell, 1998), 10 administrators were chosen as potential candidates for this study. I started this sampling with two administrators with whose work I was familiar with from professional experiences. These two administrators recommended other administrators within the BCSD who might meet the criteria and contribute to the study. This purposefully snowballed into a potential participant pool of 10 administrators. All 10 administrators met the selection criteria, but only seven agreed to participate in the study.

I sent a Letter of Invitation to all potential participants via email. These individuals were given one week to consider their participation in the study. One week after potential participants received an initial contact letter, I contacted them by telephone to answer any questions they had about their participation in the study and let them know that I would be emailing them a Consent
Form to sign and return if they wished to participate in the study. I then arranged meetings with all interested participants. At the meeting, I collected the signed consent form and answered any further questions before beginning the interview. All participants were also given a copy of the consent form for their records at the time of interview. At the initial meeting, all participants were informed of their responsibilities and rights as research participants including their option to opt out of the research study at any time without any impact to their careers. All participant interviews took place at a time and location of their convenience.

After the interview was transcribed, I shared the transcription with the participant via email as a form of member-check and allowed them an opportunity to make changes as they felt might be needed. As such, each participant’s data collection required two hours of their time – one hour for the interview itself and one hour to review their interview transcripts (post-transcription via email) and send feedback or changes as needed. Finally, all participants were also invited to attend a presentation of the research at my future thesis defence.

**Participant Backgrounds**

All seven administrators worked exclusively within the province of British Columbia throughout their careers as secondary school teachers and administrators. The participants represented over 70% of South Asian administrators within the BCSD at the secondary school level. The participants consisted of four females and three males of which three were principals and four were vice-principals. Participants varied in experience from no experience to twenty years within the administrative position. Furthermore, important differences existed between administrators. I will give background information about the most salient aspects of each administrator.
Participants.

Administrator #1. Administrator #1 has worked in the BCSD for over 20 years in various capacities including an administrative position. She grew up in a predominately South Asian neighbourhood, and later also worked as an administrator within the same neighbourhood. Her family has close ties to the community in which she grew up and later worked, and is active in the religious activities of the temple community within this neighbourhood. She was one of the first South Asian administrators within the BCSD. Administrator #1 chose to become an administrator on her own through careful reflection about what she said were her values of service and leadership. Administrator #1 is in her early 40s.

Administrator #2. Administrator #2 has worked in the BCSD for over 10 years as a teacher and teacher specialist. She is beginning her first year in an administrative position within the BCSD, but during the time of this research project she was in transition from teacher specialist into the administrative role. She chose to become an administrator after being advised to by the administrative team at her current school. Administrator #2 is in her mid-30s.

Administrator #3. Administrator #3 has been an educator for over 15 years, but has only worked in the BCSD in a leadership capacity for the last five years. Her previous experience includes working as a teacher and administrator in another district that has a large South Asian student and resident population. She has worked as an administrator in a variety of school cultures ranging from academic centred to more athletic centred. She chose to become an administrator after being advised to by the administrative team at a school where she held her longest appointment. Administrator #3 is in her early 30s.

Administrator #4. Administrator #4 has been an educator for over 20 years in the BCSD. He has strong ties to his South Asian community through active participation in cultural
functions and ceremonies. He has held leadership positions at a variety of schools within the BCSD – schools with large South Asian student populations, schools in low socioeconomic neighbourhoods, and schools in affluent neighbourhoods. He chose to become an administrator through his own volition after realizing that he possessed many of the qualities that would make a good administrator. Administrator #4 is not interested in promotions that would take him to the board offices of the BCSD because he feels that his value of being an educator only finds action when he is impacting students at the school level. Administrator #4 is in his late 50s.

Administrator #5. Administrator #5 has worked in the BCSD his entire professional career predominantly in the role of teacher, but has recently been appointed an administrative role at a school within the BCSD. This is his first school in the role of administrator. He has held previous leadership positions within the capacity of teacher leader in various forms both within and out of the professional realm of the BCSD. He has strong ties to his South Asian community through membership on boards. He purports that his values are central to Canadian thought because he was born and raised in Canada. He chose to become an administrator because he felt it was the next step in the natural progression of his career as an educator. Administrator #5 expressed interest in working outside this BCSD, if necessary, in order to fulfill his career aspirations. Administrator #5 is in his late 30s.

Administrator #6. Administrator #6 has worked in the BCSD for over 10 years in the capacity of teacher, teacher leader, and administrator. She has held administrative positions at more than one school but is still a relatively new and less experienced administrator in the BCSD. She has expressed traditional South Asian values whilst maintaining a professional life as an administrator. Her background, and principally her family background, is typical of many South Asian student backgrounds within the BCSD. She is active in South Asian life and
celebrates many of the common festivities of her religion and culture. She chose to become an administrator because her interest in how a school runs piqued her interest in educational leadership. Administrator #6 is in her mid-30s.

**Administrator #7.** Administrator #7 has worked in the BCSD for over 25 years as a teacher, teacher leader, and administrator. He is deeply rooted in the South Asian community and is avid about celebrating many of the customs and traditions of his South Asian culture and religion. He was one of the first South Asian administrators within the BCSD, and became an administrator around the same time as Administrator #1. He has been an administrator in schools with large South Asian student populations, schools in affluent neighbourhoods, and schools in low socioeconomic areas. He chose to become an administrator after careful thought about the need for South Asian administrators within the BCSD alongside considerations of the natural next step in his professional career. Administrator #7 is in his late 50s.

**Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedures**

One-hour semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven South Asian BCSD administrators. Since I used a semi-structured interview approach (Kvale, 1983, 1992, 1996), the interview questions served only as a guide for the broader conversation. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) describe interview questions as being fluid in nature because “the iterative nature of the qualitative research process in which preliminary data analysis coincides with data collection often results in altering questions as the investigators learn more about the subject” (p.316).

Interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder on site. Interviews were later transcribed and transcripts of interviews were made available to administrators via email as a form of member check which allowed participants to judge the accuracy of their responses, and
lend trust and credibility to both myself as a researcher and the research endeavour itself. All interview transcripts and data were labelled using pseudonyms to accommodate for anonymity of responses, and only my supervisor and I viewed the interview data which ensured confidentiality for all participants.

All research data were stored on a Seagate 500GB USB 3.0 external hard drive which was stored in the research supervisor’s office, Dr. Hartej Gill, after the study was complete. All data was stored using an encrypted computer. All other research artefacts, including those leading up to and after the Masters’ thesis defence was stored post-defence in Dr. Gill’s office.

The interview data was analyzed using Creswell’s data analysis spiral (Creswell, 2007a, p.151). Upon completion of each interview and prior to transcription, I began the data analysis spiral by making notes related to interview methodology and interview content. Each transcribed interview was coded multiple times in an iterative process that narrowed categories of codes into bigger themes. As such, a thematic analysis was conducted alongside the spiral coding analysis. Given the tenets of CRT, the thematic analysis and foci centred on the larger themes of race, racism, and power within education. I viewed the data from a critical CRT lens focusing on a counter-story that had related smaller themes of oppression, othering, deficit-thinking, and lack of agency. A CRT lens shaped a critical thematic analysis that focused on centring race as oppositional to the day-to-day experiences of participants within the dominant educational structures and narrative.

The interview transcripts were analyzed using a thematic analysis consistent with Lal and Suto’s (2012) analysis inquiry – I coded the data such that “themes [were] chosen based upon patterns that emerged within the data….I read and re-read all the transcripts, [noting] reoccurring themes and themes related to the research questions, and [sorted] the data into
categories….I also [asked] participants to share their reflections [of] how they made sense of the experience, and [structured] findings around their notions of what was salient or important” (p.374). Lal and Suto’s thematic analysis allowed for the salient aspects of participant counter-stories to come to the fore, and allowed for an analysis of themes across participants to render larger findings related to the research questions. After the analysis spiral (coding and thematic) was complete for each interview transcript, I grouped all common codes across interviews to analyze the main themes emerging from the participants. This thematic analysis allowed for the voice alluded to by CRT to be elucidated through a rendering of larger themes common to all participants that structured the counter-narrative of their lived experiences. The common themes formed a singular narrative (counter-story) centred on race, racism, and power that contradicted the dominant White narrative – and thus lent voice to participant stories.

**Ethical Considerations and Limitations**

Research participant confidentiality was the most pressing of ethical considerations in this study given the limited number of South Asian administrators within the BCSD at both the elementary and secondary school levels. Further, participant anonymity was compromised by the sheer limited number of South Asian administrators working in the district. In addition, I interviewed 70% of the secondary South Asian administrators within the district at the time which afforded my study almost complete participation from the small South Asian administrator potential participant pool. In referencing interview data from interview transcripts, I excluded potential identifier quotes at the expense of deeper findings in order to prevent potential identification of participants by the comments they made in their interviews. All interviewees discussed their understanding and concern of the limitations of anonymity and confidentiality prior to the
beginning of all interviews, and yet were adamant about moving forward with their interviews because they felt the study was important in furthering the understanding of their lived experiences as South Asian educational leaders. Their conviction was reassuring for me especially given some of the obstacles I faced as I attempted to gain district approval for my study.

In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of participants and their responses, the findings of this research project will refer to places and names using pseudonyms. In order to situate the school district within the greater literature within Canadian academia, the school board will only be referred to as the British Columbia School District (BCSD). I chose to reference the school board’s general geographical location in order to allow for comparison within the literature to similar studies in other regions of Canada, and ultimately the world. Participant names were replaced with administrator numbers in order to hide the identification markers of participant names relative to discussions surrounding the racialization of their unisex names. Using pseudonyms for names would have required using ethnic names in order to situate discussions around the unisex nature of their names and the challenges presented because of this and could have potentially identified participants; however, replacing names with anglicized pseudonyms would have distracted readers from the racialized nature of some of the interactions surrounding unisex names, and ultimately would have done a disservice to the participants as well as the data they provided. In addition, the use of the pseudonym of administrator number was used to hide any participant identification markers related to their positions as principals versus vice-principals.

In order to further protect the identity of administrative participants, any school names that they referred to during interviews were replaced with pseudonym school names to prevent
identification of schools. Furthermore, a discussion of participant backgrounds was limited to non-identifiable variables so as to limit any possibility of linking participant background variables to potential schools that they may have worked at within British Columbia. As such, the discussion of participant by participant backgrounds is limited and variegated to ensure confidentiality, but introduces the most salient aspects important to contextualizing their interview responses.
Chapter Five: Data Analysis and Findings

In this Findings section I outline the three major themes revealed from the data analysis of interviews as viewed through the critical lens of CRT. CRT’s focus on race, racism, and power dynamics associated with race allowed me to draw out three major themes from interview data. These three major themes represent major findings related to each of the research questions associated with my study. The major theme associated with the first research question centred on the racialization of experiences for South Asian administrators within the BCSD. The second major theme was associated with responses from administrators around the second research question, and outlined a unique South Asian leadership style rooted in a service-oriented upbringing. Lastly, the third major theme was associated with the third research question, and outlined important notions of role modelling that South Asian administrators found themselves involved with in their engagement of South Asian students. It is important to note that administrators provided much more elaborate and intricate responses to the second and third research questions; however, responses to the first research question were interspersed throughout interviews and were oftentimes elaborated on as a concluding statement to the interview. It was clear that there was apprehension in discussing the challenges they faced and the nature of any racism they experienced in education, and specifically the BCSD. I discuss each of these three major themes as related to my three research questions in the discussion that follows.

Negotiating the Tenuous Space of Leadership in the BCSD

The first major research question focussed on the challenges or opportunities that South Asian administrators within the BCSD faced in their roles as educational leaders or in the attainment of their positions as leaders. It is clear from the interview data that the major theme
associated with this research question is one of negotiating a tenuous space of leadership within the BCSD. What made this space tenuous were the racialized experiences of all of the participants of this study. Using a CRT lens to unpack this interview data, certain common experiences became apparent across participants that were reflective of an experience of discrimination and racism that affected participants’ agency and professional capacities.

All of the participants involved shared experiences of racism. However, the sense of openness to discussing any notion of racism within education, or in particular the BCSD, was often a tenuous subject for participants. For example, Administrator #2 was adamant that her experience within the BCSD lacked any racial discrimination and that she had never faced any racialization in society or in her experiences in education. Throughout her entire interview, Administrator #2 described having never experienced any prejudice or stereotypes. However, near the end of her interview, Administrator #2 began to express a less rigid stance on notions of prejudice or racialization within the BCSD by stating that there was a lack of South Asian administrator representation within the BCSD and that this possibly might reflect an intentional oversight. On the other hand, Administrator #1 started off her interview by declaring, “I’m going to say what I want to say, I always have. I’m going to tell the truth. It’s not like they can fire me now.” Administrator #1 was most candid about her experiences with racism within the BCSD. Administrators #3 and #5 also spoke candidly about the racialized context of their leadership practice, but did so closer to the middle or end of their interviews. It is apparent that the candidness of participants to share their experiences with racism within the BCSD was dependent upon three major factors.

The first major factor to openness around sharing experiences with racism was a function of years of experience. Those participants with 10 or more years in a leadership position were
comfortable expressing any racialization that they may have faced immediately at the outset of the interview. Furthermore, it was clear that participants who were experienced principals were far more vocal about their experiences with racism than were newly appointed vice-principals. For example Administrator #4, the most experienced of all principals, was very direct in expressing how racism had shaped his career:

While I don’t think I’ve encountered restrictions, I know there are restrictions. I understand that. I’m not so rose coloured glasses…I get that. I don’t acknowledge it. I push against it. There’s nothing they’re going to do to restrict me. And if there is, well fine I’ll go and do something else. And that’s how I look at life. I look at it from the perspective of – I’m good at my job, I know what I’m doing, and unless I’m doing a bad job, you can’t tell me I’m doing a bad job. And not because of the colour of my skin, nor my cultural background should I be looked at differently. Judge me on merit. Judge me on how I’ve done, and how I’ve performed. And I think that’s the message I would have for kids and teachers too. Don’t be in a way that you believe you’ve got to prove to the world that you’re better than everybody else, just accept that you’re better or as good as everybody else. If you have to strive and prove yourself, then you’re operating from a deficit model. And there are no deficits. I don’t believe I have a deficit.

This adamant vocalization outlining the existence of restrictions and limitations put upon Administrator #4, and the deficit thinking it could have potentially induced, came at the end of his interview. This last major factor to openness of discussion around issues of racism centred upon an element of rapport that developed throughout interviews. As afforded by a semi-structured interview approach, the less rigid nature of interviewing opened up a shared dialogue between myself as researcher and my participants which allowed for my insider status as South
Asian, and more importantly racialized South Asian within education, to come through. This shared experience allowed for the counter-story of racism to garner space, and courage, for dialogue.

All participants shared experiences about the negative perceptions of their attainment of roles as administrators. These negative perceptions were centred on race discussions and commonly centred on the idea best expressed by Administrators #3 and #6 that their colleagues would mention to them that “you got the position because you’re a minority.” Administrator #5 expressed the same experiences but rationalized motivations behind such comments as perhaps reflective of jealousy rather than racism. However, common to all the counter-stories of this negative perception was that participants expressed that these comments often came from White colleagues. Participants expressed their interpretation of these comments as not only negatively implying why they received their positions of leadership, but also their potential capacities within their new roles as educational leaders. Administrator #6 was candid about her trepidation over these discriminatory notions:

I have had people say outright to me that they feel like I was hired only because I fit that certain equal opportunity profile. And I found that highly offensive. I’m like, ‘Really? I don’t have any other talents? You think I only got hired because I fit this profile?’ I found that really offensive.

This questioning by White colleagues of participant capacities was what motivated most newly appointed South Asian vice-principals to “work 10% harder” (as expressed by Administrators #3, 5, and 6) than their White counterparts.

The least experienced South Asian participants expressed a way of thinking about such discriminatory comments as motivating them to work harder than their White counterparts in
order to prove that their placements as educational leaders were not based on race alone. Administrator #6 described how she does “feel the pressure to prove [herself] a bit more than I think someone – let’s say a non-South Asian or let’s say a Caucasian female would – or a Caucasian man!” All of the participants of this study framed their perceptions of working harder as attending to the self-doubt created by discriminatory comments made by their White colleagues regarding the attainment of their roles. However, more experienced South Asian participants – and exclusively principals – described how the struggle to overcome such deficit thinking was centred on a notion of positively reframing the tenuous nature of the concept of race within their roles as a non-limiting factor in their agency as professionals. Administrator #4 described this best as:

If you subjugate yourself to the other, then you become no longer having a face within society….I am aware of the fact that I am a person of colour within the system. And does it influence how I act? It doesn’t influence my professionalism.

Further complicating their sense of agency, all participants expressed perceived direct acts of discrimination or racism within their work capacities as educational leaders.

Participants described work related incidents of stereotyping South Asians as racist and discriminatory actions that questioned their abilities and roles as educational leaders. The incidents described below also show that White administrators made participants feel responsible for the wrong doings of students from the South Asian community. Administrator #6 questioned why her White colleagues would ask her to explain the actions of the “brown boys” at her school:

There are people that will always point out ‘Oh the brown guys are getting in trouble again,’ and it’s almost like I’m responsible for it – like you have to wear it. Because
you’re the next closest person that can wear it for them. So I do feel like you’re put into this role of being a representative and you’re having to wear this on you, and you’re still fighting against that stereotype.

Administrator #5 described similar questions posed to him by White colleagues whenever behavioural incidents involved South Asian “brown boys.” For Administrator #6, however, the fight against this stereotype was complicated by her identity as a South Asian female. She described how speaking out against such stereotyping of “brown boys” led to another layer of stereotyping of her own South Asian female identity where she perceived that her White colleagues assumed that her role as a South Asian female was to be weak and quiet:

Like, *NO*, I’m a strong female and I’m not submissive and I don’t cook and clean…so it’s that contradiction that can be difficult to work with.

Furthermore, Administrator #6 described many instances where a lack of weight was given to her ideas compared to similar ideas from her White male counterparts. Administrator #3 also expressed similar stereotyping and disadvantages of her South Asian female identity as a “double whammy” because she was required to navigate stereotypes of race and gendered-race.

Administrator #3 described instances where she would be called into meetings to simply translate a few words in Punjabi for parents meeting with White administrators, and how she perceived it as minimizing her capacities. Administrator #1 viewed such instances as ignorance around South Asian females in society, and in education.

Administrators #5 and #7 declared a palpable uncomfortableness they felt when entering district wide administrator meetings where the “faces of administrators” around them were predominantly White and “it’s something that you *definitely do notice* when you go to meetings.” Further, this uncomfortableness was something all the South Asian participants
voiced as a tenuous negotiation. Administrator #1 described how such meetings have often been uncomfortable for her because White colleagues in these meetings will often confuse her unisex Punjabi name and make her feel out of place because she lacked an Anglican name.

The limiting effects upon participants’ agency and perceived capacities by White colleagues of South Asians in leadership roles was best described by Administrator #5. He described stereotypical views of South Asians as not only limited to colleagues, but also to parents. Administrator #1 described this ignorance as a “lack of knowledge” that she is forced to navigate by convincing herself that she will “…take it upon [herself] to educate people about being South Asian the best [she] can.” However, Administrator #5 expressed great trepidation at the larger perception of agency and capacities of South Asian administrators:

You know, I’ve had situations where I’ve been in schools where you feel like you’re just part of the service sector. You’re no different than the maid, or the chauffeur or the butler….So that’s what I find, more in terms of the way that people respond to you.

Administrator #7 echoed the views of Administrator #5, but described the landscape of education in B.C. as less racialized than “it used to be.”

The voices of these counter-stories from each of the South Asian participants of my study culminated with a unanimous call for greater representation of South Asians in administrative roles in the BCSD. Administrators #5 and #7 furthered this call by requesting ethnic representation in administration to correspond to student demographics in schools. Administrator #5 described a distinct need for the issues of students of varying ethnic backgrounds to be attended to by more than just the White dominant culture of administrators in the BCSD. Administrator #7 described this lack of representation as a clear “oversight [needing addressal].”
It is clear from the data that leadership in the BCSD is a tenuous space for South Asian administrators. The challenges they face are centred on stereotypical perceptions of South Asians and are made difficult by the discriminatory actions of White colleagues. Discussions of leadership within the BCSD for South Asians centred on the counter-story of racism as prevalent and defining of experience and perceived capacities. This racism complicated the agency, and thus professional experiences, of South Asian administrators in this study.

**South Asian Leadership Style**

The second major research question associated with this study focussed on the day to day experiences of South Asian administrators and whether such experiences were defined by their identity as South Asians. It is clear from the interview data that the major theme associated with this research question is one of a distinct South Asian leadership style influenced by a service-oriented upbringing that strives to build connections through the importance of relationships with South Asian students which is rooted in their common cultural orientation. I define this common cultural orientation as their inclination to think and act in ways that are determined by their shared cultural values. In other words, cultural orientation transcends slight differences in cultural values between the different ethnic groups associated with being South Asian. For example, although the cultural values of a Muslim South Asian might differ from those of a Hindu South Asian, their shared cultural thinking (cultural orientation) would predispose them to think and act about certain issues in very similar ways. In addition, this service orientation is not to be misunderstood as a need to serve from a place of inferiority, but instead is a service to all humanity approach that is rooted in the cultural value of humanitarianism.

The day to day experiences of South Asian administrators in this study were two-pronged in nature. The first component of their experiences centred on role-bound notions of the
professional disposition of administrators within education. This component was similar to notions of leadership style expressed by the dominant White narrative of education. However, South Asian administrators expressed a distinct adjunct to the general ideas of leadership styles and described a notion of service orientation that was a product of their cultural upbringing. This inclination to serve, as defined by their cultural orientation, was an additive layer to their dominant-culture notions of leadership. This important counter-story of culture-specific leadership was centred on race as manifest by participants’ South Asian upbringings.

The South Asian administrators in this study had a predisposition to leading for care. Administrator #1 described this as her “South Asian roots,” and that “it’s just the way I was raised.” Administrators #1, 3, 6, and 7 all described an important facet of this leading for care as embedded in a shared non-English language with South Asian students. The shared language ability allowed participants to reach out to South Asian students and parents in unique and meaningful ways. This allowed for a forum of understanding to develop whereby connections were made stronger with students and afforded deeper relationships. Administrator #6 described “[her] biggest strength in [her] leadership style is [her] relationships with people” afforded through this shared language.

Language was not the sole factor that participants claimed influenced the ability to make deeper connections with South Asian students. The shared cultural component with South Asian students, which was a product of South Asian administrator upbringings, was a central component to influencing stronger relationships with South Asian students. Administrator #1 described this cultural component as allowing her to “know things” about student backgrounds that would otherwise be unknown. Administrator #6 described the importance of shared culture for opening up spaces for dialogue with South Asian students:
I think the obvious one is just the understanding of culture. Culturally speaking, I know what it’s like to be in a South Asian household, as do they. And so a lot of core values are the same, and so I think that that makes it easier in terms of having those conversations, and helping them navigate the tough terrain of high school. Because I feel like they wouldn’t have those kinds of open conversations with somebody who doesn’t understand the culture. So I think that that takes away one layer of complexity in just having a relationship with the kids too – is that piece of ‘Oh yeah, I totally get what you’re talking about – we’re from the same culture and oh yeah I get it!’

This extra layer of complexity in relationships was echoed by all participants who described instances where their cultural insiderness was used to connect with, motivate, and remediate South Asian student behaviours.

The utility of shared language and culture as bridging the cultural gap for South Asian students was rooted in a service leadership that was strongly influenced by participant upbringings. Every participant described how the care orientation of their leadership was an artefact of their family’s influence and ideologies as part of their upbringing. Administrator #1 described these South Asian values:

People will describe my style as generous and I’ll say ‘We were taught that you share what you have…you share your blessings.’ So I’m generous with my time and my resources because that’s how I was taught. So that is to me a part of South Asian culture.

Administrator #3 described this upbringing as instilling certain South Asian values within her that undoubtedly influenced her actions as an educational leader because “what our identities are always influence how we do things.” This unique South Asian upbringing described by participants influenced their professional actions in service and care oriented ways. However,
many participants described the importance of this upbringing as not only allowing for deeper connections with South Asian students, but also predisposing South Asian administrators to develop deeper awareness for all ethnic students. Administrator #4 described these values as rendering a stronger predisposition to consider the variable of culture in dealings with all students:

I think it influences my cultural awareness and how I deal with others. And how I understand what others are bringing to the table in terms of their perception of themselves.

The South Asian participants in this study displayed a uniquely South Asian leadership style. This leadership for service and care was a product of their unique cultural upbringing. The shared language and cultural values between South Asian administrators and South Asian students allowed for deeper relationships built on strong cultural connections. The dominant culture narratives of leadership styles lack a focus on the variable of ethnicity upon leadership. The counter-story of participants in this study alluded to the influence of a South Asian cultural upbringing upon the conventional leadership styles of the dominant narrative. This counter-story tells of a professional and personal component to leadership that is uniquely influenced by the variable of race.

**South Asian Role Models**

The third major research question associated with this study focussed on the impact that South Asian participants felt they had on the educational experiences of South Asian students in the BCSD. It is clear from the interview data that the major theme associated with this research question is that South Asian administrators believe that they serve as positive role models to marginalized South Asian students and connect with such students on an identity formation level
through a sense of genuine empathy afforded by shared experience. Participants believed that race, racism, and the dominant culture institutions of education in B.C. served to marginalize some South Asian students. Similar to negative perceptions of their agency and capacities as professional administrators in the BCSD, participants felt that South Asian students also faced similar negative perceptions of themselves which led to marginalization. This counter-story of race as central to the negative experiences of some South Asian students and the positive effect that South Asian role models can play in the educational experiences of these marginalized students goes against the dominant White narrative that race is not an important variable to leadership effectiveness.

Administrators #1, 4, 5, 6, and 7 described the educational experiences of some South Asian students as clearly marginalized. They believed that the hegemonic education system in B.C. marginalized South Asian students through similar stereotypes faced by South Asian administrators themselves. The strategy of Administrator #6 to open her office up to a shared space of dialogue led to her belief that South Asian students also feel they are marginalized:

I definitely feel like they feel they are marginalized. They always feel like they are not being heard. And they do feel that it’s because of who they are.

The ability of Administrator #4 to connect with these students allowed him to break down these stereotypes through school wide initiatives that demonstrated how South Asian students were productive members of school communities with a voice that had relevant insights to share. He described this experience as unleashing “the awesome power of South Asian kids.”

The South Asian administrators in this study all felt strongly that they served as role models for all South Asian students. Administrator #3 described the inevitability of being a role model as “you end up acting as a role model, whether you intend on doing that or not.”
Administrator #4 also described the inevitable nature of being a South Asian role model. He described how being a positive role model and displaying a successful demeanor for South Asian students is important for these students’ notions of what is possible for them. He described how these notions of acknowledging he was a role model, and choosing to be a role model, were rooted in his upbringing:

>You are a role model. You are a mentor. At all times. You don’t do it overtly, but you do it by your actions. And if your actions don’t speak to integrity, and ethics, and morality, or if they don’t speak to the humanistic values that we want for our greater society….And that’s always been something, that again, I got from my family.

Although acknowledging that a South Asian administrator is oftentimes in an advantaged position over his White counterparts in knowing the context of South Asian students, and ultimately in impacting these students in greater positive ways, Administrator #4 was careful to note that this is irrelevant if the connection and relationship to these students is not developed. Within that connection and relationship building, he noted how it was important in “not seeing them as South Asian kids, but just seeing them as kids.”

Administrators #1, 5, 6, and 7 also described the utility of their role modelling as dependent upon the ability to connect and relate to South Asian students. Administrator #7 described how the cultural knowledge of South Asian students helped him better connect, and ultimately impact, the South Asian student population within his schools over White administrators:

>And I think because there’s a connection there, so there’s an understanding of perhaps the cultural norms in our community. Also, language helps bridge barriers. So it’s little
things like that, it’s just more of an understanding about culture – being comfortable with parents from that community and with kids. And so it does have an impact.

All of the participants alluded to the idea that this greater sense of connection was an extension of their South Asian leadership style’s influence on South Asian students. All participants shared the importance of their South Asian leadership style as influencing the identity formation dynamics of marginalized South Asian students. Administrator #1 stated that “having minority role models helps them with their identity issues.” She allocated the differential impact she felt South Asian administrators had on South Asian students to their shared cultural and linguistic context:

But, there were differences [with White administrators]…and I thought it would be easier in some cases if there were someone who understood what [South Asian students] were going through, specifically certain neighbourhoods. There are things that people won’t talk about. So, I had some knowledge of what was going on, whether they shared it with me or not.

She described the value of this insider knowledge as helping her connect with South Asian students at a deeper identity formation level than her White counterparts. Intricately knowing the context of South Asian families allowed Administrator #1 to engage with South Asian students more proactively and prevented many at risk youth from escalating their behaviours to detrimental levels. She described how her status as a South Asian role model allowed her to open up dialogue with at risk South Asian students that would otherwise be unapproachable by White administrators. This was similar to Administrator #6’s open office policy where dialogue with South Asian students was possible. Administrator #1 modelled behaviour and a sense of accomplishment, as well as honouring service, that at the very least opened “[South Asian
students’] eyes” to what was right and wrong. Administrator #7 described the cumulative effect of the connection through language and culture, as well as through role modelling, as impacting the identity formation of South Asian students:

I think it does, I mean there’s a connection. But there is – you can’t avoid – there’s a connection and a relationship there and it impacts in a positive way. I think there’s no doubt being South Asian, it does impact South Asian students because I’m not their average Caucasian teacher.

Although acknowledging that the appearance of a South Asian administrator had a powerful effect on the identity of South Asian students, he said that “you have to be clear with them about how that happens – like what got me where I am.”

All participants described how the optics of seeing a South Asian administrator added to the value of their role modelling through its instant influence on the identity formation dynamics in South Asian students. Administrator #3 described how the visible nature of a South Asian role model affected identity formation dynamics in South Asian students “because they’ll see something that maybe they’re not able to see within their immediate family.” She described how South Asian female students often mentioned to her that they looked up to her and how she was a “role model” to them, and how she viewed the context of these comments and her connection and influence upon these students’ identity formation as “unavoidable.” Coming to the realization that he was a visible role model for South Asian students “struck a chord” with Administrator #4:

I understand that that was a seminal thing for me to understand, that by working with young kids, I am a role model for minority kids. They value seeing somebody who may have a shared experience, in terms of their cultural identity, in terms of their immigrant
identity, in terms of how and when they have faced or face issues of racism as a minority within the system.

Similar to Administrator #4, all participants in this study viewed the cultural awareness that South Asian role models possessed as far more effective at building connections with South Asian students compared to any potential awareness afforded by cultural sensitivity training programs given to White administrators. The strength of South Asian role models as cultural ambassadors for South Asian students was important to Administrators #1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. Administrator #3 argued that this unavoidable instant positive influence on South Asian students was something the BCSD needed to consider:

I think that’s where the diversity piece is really really important in the districts. It’s that you want to have enough of a population – and it should really be representative in the administration as well as the teaching staff – where all of the kids will be able to connect with somebody. You want them to have a safe place and a role model.

She thought that the unavoidable nature of the connection that shared ethnicity created was argument enough that she impacted South Asian students differently, and arguably in greater positive ways, than her White counterparts. Administrator #7 was adamant that White administrators were limited in their knowledge of the South Asian community and that he “would have a better sense of that community” because he was from that community. He furthered his argument of the importance of a cultural connection between administrator and students by calling for an “ethnic balance” in the administrative makeup of the BCSD because South Asian administrators have a greater “understanding of nuances and connection” with South Asian students than White administrators.
The South Asian participants of this study felt that South Asian students in the BCSD were marginalized, in part, through stereotyping similar to that faced by the participants themselves. This counter-story of the marginalized experiences of South Asian students centred upon the positive influence that participants felt their role modeling had on the educational experiences of South Asian students. Predisposed to connect strongly with South Asian students through their service-oriented leadership style, South Asian participants felt the optics and actions of their role modeling positively affected the identity formation dynamics in marginalized South Asian students. This counter-story tells of the distinct role that race in leadership played upon identity formation and schooling experiences in marginalized South Asian students. Participants believed that the larger institutional structures of schooling that served to stereotype, and therefore marginalize South Asian students, had less negative impact because of the simple optics of South Asian administrators in roles of leadership. Furthermore, participants described cultural sensitivity training programs for White administrators as lacking the nuanced forms of cultural awareness and understanding afforded by South Asian administrators. This counter-story tells of the superiority of minority race cultural knowledge over the dominant White narrative of training for cultural knowledge.

It is important to note that the three major themes associated with the data analysis centred on findings associated with race as an important variable of experience within the BCSD at the administrative and student levels. The three major research questions focussed on the lived experiences of South Asian administrators in their roles as educational leaders in the BCSD. As outlined by CRT, a counter-story to the dominant White narrative of these lived experiences centred on the racialization of experience for South Asian administrators. Furthermore, this counter-story centred on the distinct influence that race has on leadership style.
and effectiveness in relation to South Asian administrators and South Asian students’ identity formation dynamics.
Chapter Six: Discussion

In this Discussion section I outline three major findings from the responses of South Asian administrators to the three research questions of this study. The three research questions focussed on: (a) challenges South Asian administrators face or have faced in their role as administrators or in the attainment of their positions as educational leaders in the BCSD, (b) how the daily experiences of these administrators impact their leadership style, and (c) how these administrators described their impact on the educational experiences of South Asian students in their schools. Upon data analysis through a CRT lens, three major themes came to light which afforded three major findings associated with each research question, respectively: (a) leadership within the BCSD is tenuous for South Asian administrators because it centres on a racialized experience that serves to limit their agency within their roles, (b) South Asian administrators have a distinct leadership style influenced by a service-oriented upbringing that strives to build connections through the importance of relationships with South Asian students which is rooted in their common cultural orientation, and (c) South Asian administrators believe that they serve as positive role models for marginalized South Asian students and connect with these students on an identity formation level through a sense of genuine empathy afforded by a shared experience. I will discuss each of these three major findings below under the headings, respectively, of racialized experiences, South Asian leadership style, and ethnic role models.

Racialized Experiences

The abundance of research in my literature review focussing on equity and principal succession and racism in education outlined a potential counter-story to the lived experiences of people of colour within the realm of education. Brooks and Clunis (2007) state that it is important that the voices of ethnic administrators be heard to clarify and accurately describe the
plight of people of colour within education. Through a CRT lens, it can be said that the South Asian administrators in this study verified Brooks and Clunis’ claim by voicing a counter-story centred on the tenuous nature of their leadership practice within the BCSD.

The racialized nature of the lived experiences of South Asian administrators within this study centred on perceived and active systemic and institutional racism. All of the administrators interviewed voiced stories around racial incidents within their work situations, and acknowledged the pervasive nature of racism within education and the greater society of B.C. and Canada (Gillborn, 2005). However, Administrator #2 was adamant about the lack of racial prejudice she may have faced in her work capacity as a teacher specialist and her transition into administration. Her responses were diametrically opposed to the content of responses expressed by all other administrators in this study and may be a reflection of her lack of experience in the role. Furthermore, it is possible that her adamant nature to deny any racism may be a result of scrutiny she faced from BCSD board office members about participation in my study and is perhaps indicative of the nature of the power dynamics within the BCSD that shape and influence the content of the counter-story of people of colour working within the district (Hartlep, 2009). Her actions may be indicative of the interest convergence at play as she navigates her new role and refuses to acknowledge the glaring culpability of the White district offices of the BCSD in denying the active promotion of South Asians into the role of administrator (Jackson, 2011). There may be a culture within the BCSD of silence and oppression of voice, especially for new administrators seeking to make a name for themselves in the district and reciprocate the good will of the White BCSD offices in gracing them with promotion to the role of administrator. Administrator #2’s lack of views of the racialized nature of education within the BCSD, even in her previous role as teacher specialist, may be a product
of the differential racialization of the White district offices of the BCSD in creating an atmosphere of being in the “old boys club,” as Administrator #1 spoke of (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Hartlep, 2009). She may perceive herself to be an ‘accepted race’ and strives to align her future interests with those of the White board (Hartlep, 2009).

The tentative nature of most of the administrators in this study to not only participate but to supply candid responses was indicative of the delicate nature of power balance within the structures of the BCSD. Administrator #1 spoke to this by declaring she did not care what the BCSD would say about her responses because her tenure was lengthy enough to justify no risk of dismissal. Further, the deliberate threat to sabotage the participant pool of this study by White district office members of the BCSD is indicative of how endemic racism is within the educational context of B.C., and the active culpability of the BCSD in suppression of the voice of people of colour (Lopez, 2003; Hartlep, 2009).

All of the administrators, except Administrator #2, provided a counter-story centred on the racialized nature of the attainment of their positions, the perception of South Asians within the role of administrator, effects of racism on their work capacity, and their perception of systemic racism indicative in the lack of ethnic representation within administration in the BCSD (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

The recent shift in administrative demographics within the BCSD towards a South Asian profile has possibly been in response to a growing South Asian student demographic. Nonetheless, the South Asian representation in administration is still clearly underrepresented in relation to the South Asian student population within the district. All of the administrators in this study expressed a desire for greater representation of South Asian administrators, especially in schools with significant South Asian populations. The BCSD has shifted in administrative
demographic policies from a predominantly White composition to incorporating more ethnic administrators. However, all participants expressed feelings of systemic racism surrounding representation issues, citing the growing trend toward female White administrators within the district as a de facto beneficiary of the illusionary notions of inclusivity within the BCSD. The lack of ethnic balance within the district at the administrative level, especially in terms of South Asian administrators, has led to the marginalization of minority students. The participants of this study collectively agreed that South Asian students are marginalized in part because of the lack of representation of South Asian administrators within the district. This was a key juncture where systemic and institutional racism intersected within the BCSD (Cummins, 1997; Dei, 1995b, 2003b).

The illusion of inclusivity through partial representation of South Asians within administration in the BCSD serves White interests in two ways. As CRT outlines, the shared interest for inclusivity by Whites and South Asians serves White interests far more than the interest of South Asians. As outlined by the interest convergence principle, the White district staff meet the requirements of portraying an image of inclusivity by token representation of a few South Asian administrators on staff in schools, while South Asian teachers promoted to the role of administrator feel that a merit based promotion is genuine in its lack of racial prejudice (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Lopez, 2003). Furthermore, with the shift in power towards inclusivity that is represented in the growing South Asian population in schools, the White district members undoubtedly must attend to the ethnic needs of the changing student population. At this point, White interests at the district level cease to align with the racialization of South Asians through limiting opportunities for promotion and instead align with the societal and systemic push towards accepting South Asians as a favoured race. As outlined in CRT, this
differential racialization is possibly an active component of the promotion of South Asians into this new realm of administration (Hartlep, 2009).

Yet the participants of this study still expressed some trepidation with their place in the district as administrators. The negative comments made by White colleagues who alleged that South Asian participants were promoted to administrative roles only “because [they were] South Asian” questioned participant capacities and served to create a tenuous terrain of leadership for South Asian participants. Unbeknownst to their White colleagues, these racialized comments serve to insult the abilities of South Asian administrators. Denevi and Pastan (2006) argue that racism within education is difficult for Whites to address because of group membership issues, and this may be a factor behind such comments. Administrator #6 went so far as to describe her angst with knowing whether her promotion had to do with her ability or a part of the BCSD’s plan to attend to the optics of inclusivity by being visibly inclusive through representation. To varying degrees, all other participants also expressed a curiosity of whether a component of their attainment had to do with the BCSD’s notions of appearing to be inclusive. This curiosity or doubt led to a two-fold affect upon the work experience of South Asian administrators within this study – the need to work 10% harder, and the invisible racism of colleagues.

All of the participants expressed their view that they needed to work “10% harder” than their White counterparts in order to prove that they belonged in the role. This is similar to the “double consciousness” alluded to in the literature as the South Asian cultural notion of working harder to prove oneself collides with oppressive institutional demands for the capacity to do the work (Levin, Walker, Haberler & Jackson-Boothby, 2013). Although not attributing this notion to a racialized context, Administrator #2 also expressed the same view on working harder. This deficit thinking may be seeded from their curiosity or doubt of attainment of their positions, but
was further reinforced by the racialized comments they all described that their White teacher counterparts (and sometimes White administrative colleagues) made about their job attainment. The participants of this study faced racialized comments in the form of minimizing statements made about their capacities to gain their positions on merit alone, and not based upon a form of ethnic quota filling for the BCSD. As outlined by Lacocque (2013), the participants clearly faced invisible racism. The race based remarks made by the participants’ colleagues were both microinsults and microaggressions against South Asians. Furthermore, the deep seeded need to work “10% harder” by all the participants to show that they belonged in the positions they were given were a form of microinvalidation at the hands of their White counterparts which clearly led to deficit thinking within the South Asian participants.

As outlined by CRT, this interest convergence serves the interests of the White elite power brokers of the BCSD district offices (Hartlep, 2009). Although the BCSD has created a false notion of merit based and colour-blind promotion within the district, the participants of this study alluded to an “old boys club” that restricts, relinquishes, and portions out power within the district. As Hartlep (2009) outlines, merit based approaches operate from a position of advantage for White elites whose starting points are advantaged over their minority counterparts. The BCSD’s illusion of merit based promotion has created a culture of deficit thinking within the South Asian participants by promoting and reinforcing the White interests of teacher colleagues who question the merit behind promotions as well as the invisible racism that ensues because of this (Lacocque, 2013). The BCSD benefits in maintaining power over the South Asian participants by creating notions of the other within such administrators who feel they inherently do not belong in such roles and need to work harder to prove it. The notion of proving their worth as administrators puts South Asians at a power disadvantage relative to their White BCSD
counterparts. As such, although the BCSD White power elites give up positional power to South Asians promoted to the role of administrator, they reinforce psychological power over them. As CRT outlines, this interest convergence serves the needs of the BCSD White power elites.

An adjunct effect to the notion of invisible racism and working “10% harder” is the active discrimination that ensues because of the perceived inferior position created for these promoted South Asian administrators, and its negative effect upon their agency within their leadership roles. Orelus (2013) outlines the personal and professional lived experiences of professors of colour with institutional racism within education and describes the negative effects of this racism upon professors of colour and the inherent limitations it puts on them (p.1). It is apparent that the racialized journey of these professors is rooted in stereotypical views of people of colour within the professional realm and influences these professors to feel the pressure to prove themselves. Similar feelings of pressure were expressed by administrators in this study that may have contributed to notions of working “10% harder.” Furthermore, all of the administrators voiced perceived and active differential treatment within their roles that was racialized in nature. This treatment served to minimize their perceived capacities through actions centred on their race. For example, important to this negative perception of South Asian administrator capacities was that all participants described having to “wear” the pathology of “brown boy” actions at their schools. In fact, the participants felt that they were implicitly asked to explain the stereotypical notions that their White colleagues had about the behaviour and capacities of these “brown boys,” and by virtue, of the same “brown” administrators. Ryan (2003) explains that some White administrators do not see stereotyping as a form of racism, and this may be a reflection of such ignorance. As outlined in CRT, racism is endemic to people of colour in greater society and manifests itself as institutional racism when it limits the work
capacity of individuals (Gillborn, 2005, 2009, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). All of the participants voiced examples of prejudicial acts directed at their work capacity as well as invisible racism that served to limit their goals within the role of administrator. Administrator #4 voiced defiance to this limitation by stating that, “I push against it. There’s nothing they’re going to do to restrict me.” Further examples include Administrator #3 was called into meetings to simply translate a few Punjabi words, Administrator #1 constantly faced confusion over her unisex name and was often confused with another person in the district, and Administrator #6 saw other male White counterparts with similar insights to her applauded for their ingenuity while she received no recognition for the same insights.

Further complicating this racism was the issue of gender. Administrators #1, 3, and 6 all described examples of racialized work contexts that were further exacerbated by the complexity of stereotypes associated with their female genders. Administrator #3 described the “double whammy” of being South Asian and a South Asian female. Administrator #6 described the stereotypes of South Asian females as quiet and complicit individuals as influencing feedback she received regarding insights she had compared to similar insights from her White male counterparts. Often looked upon as “not acting the way a South Asian female should,” Administrator #6 described how her comments would be minimized in relation to her White male counterparts despite the similarity of their views. Building on CRT’s activist dimension of anti-racist thought, Dei (1995a) argues for an “integrative anti-racism” that crosses race, class, gender lines, sexual identity, and ability to better contextualize anti-racist discourse within the pre-existing institutional structures. This, in effect, would attend to the variable of gender discrimination within race as outlined in this counter-story provided by female South Asian participants.
The racialized journey of the South Asian participants in this study indicate that the institutional structures of the BCSD are reflective of the larger systemic racism faced by South Asians within B.C. Brooks and Clunis (2007) state that it is important that the voices of ethnic administrators be heard to clarify and accurately describe the plight of people of colour within education. This research has shown the value in investigating this voice of people of colour. Through an interview analysis, the counter-stories of South Asian administrators were elucidated. As outlined in CRT, the voice of colour allowed for a counter narrative that usurped the dominant cultural notions of equality of treatment and equity for those minoritized. It appears that racism is endemic to the institutional experiences of South Asian administrators as complicated by the interest convergence of BCSD elite Whites who prefer the differential racialization of South Asians to serve their larger purpose of power dominance.

**South Asian Leadership Style**

The South Asian participants in this study voiced a clear theme regarding their leadership style for care and service, and their beliefs of the influence of their upbringing upon their leadership orientation. Furthermore, the participants expressed a distinct leadership style related to their interactions with South Asian students that allowed them to build strong connections through positive relationships with South Asian students. It can be concluded that South Asian administrators in this study believe they have a distinct leadership style as it relates to South Asian students which is influenced by their service-oriented upbringing rooted in their common cultural orientation (Cummins, 1996; Ogbu, 1998). The counter-story of participants in this study alluded to the influence of a South Asian cultural upbringing upon the conventional leadership styles of the dominant White narrative. The participants viewed this South Asian leadership style as more beneficial and effective in contextualizing the educational experiences
of South Asian students than similar leadership styles practiced by their White counterparts (Dei, 2003; Ghilay, Y. & Gilay, R., 2011; Haar & Robicheau, 2008; Heck, R. & Hallinger, P., 2005; Leithwood, K., 2008). This counter-story tells of a professional and personal component to leadership that is uniquely influenced by the variable of race.

The participants of this study viewed cultural awareness training provided by the BCSD and other educational institutions for White administrators as beneficial but not complete in their preparation of administrators for understanding the nuanced form of cultural awareness that a South Asian administrator possessed (Ylimaki, R. & Jacobson, S., 2013). Administrator #3 described the depth of this nuanced form of cultural awareness as affording “true empathy” that rendered deeper connections and stronger relationships with South Asian students. Administrator #1 contextualized the lack of depth a White administrator might have with the empathy piece by stating that “you can only show so much empathy without having experienced it yourself.” All of the participants expressed the main shortcoming with cultural awareness training, and by virtue White administrator leadership styles relative to South Asian students, as rooted in a lack of insider knowledge that a shared cultural orientation with South Asian students affords (Haniff, 1985; Labaree, 2002; Mori, 2012). The strength of South Asian administrators and their service-oriented leadership style was rooted in their upbringing.

All participants described their South Asian leadership style as deeply rooted in their South Asian familial upbringing. Participants grew up in South Asian homes that centred familial values on South Asian cultural norms of giving, care, and service for others. All participants grew up in homes that carried pride for their culture and race and purported values of service for others, and love and care for their own race. Furthermore, their upbringing was influenced by the racialized context of systemic racism faced by their parents and manifested
itself in deeper understandings of those who face racism along with a passion for uplifting the voices of those who face racialization. As outlined in CRT, the endemic nature of racism faced by these administrators growing up influenced within them a leadership style centred on South Asian concepts of service and care (Gillborn, 2010). Administrator #4 described this centering as his mantra for life voiced by his father, “Go out and do everything, but don’t forget who you are.” Administrator #1 further described this racialized upbringing and the negotiation through it by describing how she “understood that [racism existed], but we were also taught that this was our way in and that if we were going to succeed in the West, we had to learn to tolerate a certain amount of it.” In this regard, tolerance becomes a very valuable strategy for survival in the complex terrain of leadership in the BCSD.

The participants felt that their service orientation allowed them to garner deeper connections and stronger relationships with South Asian students than their White counterparts. Participants believed that their insider knowledge of South Asian language and culture removed the “cultural gap” faced by most White administrators when relating to South Asian students. South Asian administrators were able to connect with students and parents through shared language and familial values centred on South Asian cultural norms. The perceived deeper connection this afforded allowed for a stronger positive influence upon South Asian students and enhanced the educational experiences of South Asian students (Dei, 2003; Ogbu, 1998). As outlined by Cummins (1996), minority administrators serve to shift the demographics of education away from the dominant hegemonic imperatives toward one of inclusivity which enhances the educational context of marginalized minority students.

The genesis and subsequent effectiveness of a South Asian leadership style is clearly rooted in the endemic racism faced by the participants growing up and an acknowledgement of
the differential schooling experiences faced by South Asian students within the White 
educational structures within the BCSD (Dei, 2003b; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Hartlep 2009). 
Administrator #5 and Administrator #7 were adamant that ethnic balance and representation in 
the administrative structures of the BCSD would allow for race based leadership styles to 
promote the educational experiences of marginalized ethnic students. Participants acknowledged 
the power of insider cultural knowledge and the influence of race upon leadership styles in 
benefiting the experiences of South Asian students, and adding to the cultural awareness of the 
district. As such, participants voiced the need for greater cultural representation and balance 
among administrative staff within the BCSD to supplement the cultural awareness training 
afforded to White administrative candidates.

**Ethnic Role Models**

As outlined in my literature review, Ogbu (1998) argues that the ecology of minority 
students includes their differential school treatment reflective of the same experiences they face 
in the wider society. In response to this reality, Ogbu purports the need for role models for 
minority students. These role models are symbols of success. Further, these role models provide 
students with the motivation to succeed in school while garnering respect and admiration that 
encourages emulation. Similar to Ogbu’s recommendation for role models, Cummins (1996) 
notes the low representation of minority educators on staff in schools and how this symbolizes 
systemic racism. Unlike Ogbu though, Cummins attributes minority student academic 
achievement as directly related to identity formation dynamics, rather than cultural or ecological 
factors. However, the participants in this research study attributed the effect of role modelling to 
not only ecological and cultural factors, but also to identity formation factors.
South Asian administrators believe that they serve as positive role models to marginalized South Asian students and connect with such students on an identity formation level through a sense of genuine empathy afforded by a shared experience. The South Asian administrators in this study believed they had a greater positive impact on the educational experiences of South Asian students than White administrators. Participants described the impact their presence in education had on the role modelling for South Asian students, the effect on the identity formation dynamics within South Asian students, and the marginalization experience of South Asian students within the BCSD.

Participants were cognizant of the palpable impact their sheer presence within administrative roles in the educational structures of the BCSD had upon the optics of education and the larger society for South Asian students. As outlined in CRT, the endemic racism of people of colour affords institutional structures that mimic systemic racism within greater society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This institutional racism serves to limit the opportunities for people of colour and is indicative of the unbalanced representation of South Asian educational leaders within the BCSD. Many participants voiced their confusion over the lack of South Asian administrators within schools in the BCSD with large South Asian student populations. Participants described the impact their South Asian leadership style had upon South Asian students as inherently effective only because of their presence in roles of leadership and power within the BCSD (Haar & Robicheau, 2008). Participants created a greater respect for the larger society within South Asian students, as well as for their educational experiences within the BCSD, by the participants’ positions in roles of leadership and influence within schools (Cummins, 1997; Ogbu, 1998).
However, the greatest impact South Asian administrator role modelling and leadership style had was upon the identity formation dynamics of South Asian students. Participants described an undoubtedly positive impact South Asian leaders had upon the understanding of self for South Asian students (Cummins, 1996, 1997). South Asian administrators affected identity formation dynamics through deeper empathy afforded by a shared cultural and societal experience, affective communication through shared language and awareness of cultural context, and deeper connections alongside stronger relationships through their approachability as positive South Asian role models. These factors were artefacts of their service-oriented leadership style. Administrator #7 described the impact South Asian administrators have upon the identity formation dynamics of South Asian students as something “you can’t avoid” and that “there’s a connection and a relationship there and it impacts in a positive way.”

Administrator #6 described South Asian students as feeling marginalized within the educational structures of the BCSD (Cummins, 1996; Dei, 2003; Gillborn, 2006). However, she argued that South Asian administrators’ ability to relate to these students “one-on-one” allows for the counter-voice of these students to be heard (Hartlep, 2009). She argued that South Asian students feel marginalized by racism within BCSD schools through stereotyping of their abilities and behaviours similar to the stereotyping South Asian administrators face in the BCSD that limits their own agency. This shared counter-story centering on invisible racism that actively and silently affects the capacities and agency of South Asians within the institutional structures of the BCSD was what participants believed allowed them to connect and influence deep identity formation dynamics within South Asian students (Lacocque, 2013). South Asian administrators in this study stated that they were better able to connect with these marginalized South Asian students over their White counterparts because of the nature of their South Asian leadership
style, their visible and active role modelling for South Asian students, and the impact their successful navigation of endemic racism had upon the identity formation dynamics of South Asian students.

Participants’ views of the importance of visible minority role models reinforced key aspects of inclusive education put forth by Dei (2003). Central to his argument, Dei acknowledges the lack of representation of visible minorities within schools, and the inherent effect it has on how schooling structures are viewed by minority students. All participants voiced a counter-story that expressed the positive effect that minority representation in school structures had upon minority student success. This counter-story reinforces Dei’s view that minority representation in school structures is central to minority student success. Participants viewed their representation as central to the positive schooling experiences of South Asian students, and called for greater representation of South Asians in administrative roles in the BCSD. Participant counter-stories reinforced and reiterated Dei’s perception that changes in Canadian society have not reflected themselves in the ethnic and cultural mix of representation of staff and administrators within schools (Dei, 2003, p.243). Specific to the realm of education, the participant counter-story of a lack of representation within school boards reinforced Carr’s (1999) findings that practice lags behind policy related to anti-racist staffing practices.

The discussion of the findings of this research study has centred on the racialized experiences of South Asian administrators within the BCSD. The racialized nature of leadership within the BCSD serves to limit professional spaces for South Asian administrators. Furthermore, participants believe that there are clear benefits to the interaction they have with marginalized South Asian students. This interaction normalizes the experiences of these students through a distinct South Asian leadership style only afforded by South Asians in leadership roles.
in the BCSD. This counter-story goes against the dominant narrative in education that race is not a factor in the educational experiences of minority students, and is not an important variable in effective leadership practice when dealing with marginalized minority students.
Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Recommendations

This research study centred on the experiences of South Asian administrators within the BCSD through interview analysis using a CRT theoretical framework to shed light on three major research questions: (a) the challenges South Asian administrators face or have faced in their role as administrators or in the attainment of their positions as educational leaders in the BCSD, (b) how the daily experiences of these administrators impact their leadership style, and (c) how these administrators described their impact on the educational experiences of South Asian students in their schools. The three major findings associated with each of the research questions, respectively, were: (a) South Asian administrators face endemic racism within their roles in the BCSD that prejudice their work capacities, (b) South Asian administrators have a distinct leadership style as it relates to South Asian students which is influenced by their service-oriented upbringing rooted in their common cultural orientation, and (c) South Asian administrators believe they have a greater positive impact on the educational experiences of South Asian students than White administrators.

This study has helped inform my interpretations of many of the issues I described in Chapter 1. My introduction outlined critical incidents I experienced as a secondary school teacher within B.C. that centred on stereotypes from colleagues and a racialized work capacity. Particularly, the situation surrounding the politics of my room whereby I was first given an old wood shop to teach Science is indicative of similar incidents faced by South Asian administrators in this study that prejudiced their work capacity and ultimately affected their agency. Many participants echoed a similar experience of having to deal with the stereotypical comments made about “brown boys,” and the need to have to “wear” the pathology of the undisciplined actions of these boys. The reluctance of the White board offices of the BCSD toward this research
endeavour was unsuccessful in closing off what proved to be a crucial space for the voice of the counter-story of participants. Most revealing throughout the journey of this study was that my personal counter-story was echoed in the voices of the participants’ counter-stories. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), in their original seminal paper, explain that “the ‘voice’ component of critical race theory provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step on the road to justice” (p.58). Dixon and Rousseau (2005) further explain that ‘voice’ does not imply a singular story or account, rather the stories are different but the experience of racism is common as manifest in the shared ‘voice’ (p.11). My stories and experiences of racism in the BCSD, although different than those of participants, exposed a shared experience and common counter-story with racism that manifest itself in the findings of this study. My experiences with this research have undoubtedly further shaped my views around the challenges that modern day notions of racism can bring for South Asians in education. Particularly, the racism I faced was similar to that faced by the participants of this study and uncovered the pernicious nature of covert racism and its effects on the psyche and agency of minorities in education.

I felt that my experiences in Chapter 1 had no forum for expression in the largely hegemonic educational structures in B.C public schools. It was this space in academia where my counter-story found voice and context within the larger counter-story revealed through this research. In education, and particularly in the BCSD, spaces for open dialogue about racialized experiences do not exist. My reluctance to openly communicate these experiences within the modern day educational structures in B.C. was not outlier behaviour. In fact, all of the participants showed some reluctance, to varying degrees, to communicate their experiences around racism in education, with Administrator #2 modelling the most adamant of stances
against sharing a counter-story. However, all of the administrators’ ideas and views changed towards the end of their interviews as they articulated experiences with racism. This research opened up a shared space for the voices of racialization which undoubtedly was transformative for all involved in this study. Hearing the counter-story of racism unfold through participants’ voices validated many of my feelings around oppressive incidents I had seen and experienced. In many instances, it was clear through post-interview comments from the South Asian participants that they felt the study was important and served to transform them. For example, echoing the views of Administrators #3, 4, 5, and 7, Administrator #6 described the interview experience as “allowing [her] to really think about [her] experiences of being South Asian and the racism [she] faced.”

Studies similar to this are clearly important in opening up spaces for a counter-voice to the dominant hegemonic notions of educational experiences for minorities in education. These spaces can serve a transformative function for those facing racism by validating the context of their experiences within the larger counter-story put forth by the research. Similar to my experiences of validation, a sharing space would allow other South Asians in education to position their experiences within the larger dialogue of future policy movements within the BCSD. It would allow for transformation of their thinking by allowing themselves to find space to think about the oppression they face in schools. This space would echo of a counter-story with a critical voice.

Research similar to this study could also serve to open up spaces for more difficult dialogue around racism and racialization in education. This would be particularly useful for marginalized groups in school districts, similar to the South Asian administrators in this study, to have opportunities to share and validate each other’s oppression. Similar to the transformation
elicited in the participants of my study, as well as myself as researcher, through their sharing and
generating of a collective counter-story, a space for sharing for marginalized groups in education
would not only be informative, but healing. These counter-stories might serve to open up spaces
for anti-racism research in education which could have the potential to provide a critical voice
toward the policies of school boards in B.C.

Educational policy in B.C. has focussed on a form of benevolent multiculturalism similar
to that outlined by Raby (2007) and Aveling (2007) that identifies anti-racist practice as
focussing on tolerance of diversity. This study alludes to the fact that tolerance education is not
sufficient enough to overcome the challenges of the power dynamics of racism outlined by CRT,
and validated by the counter-story of South Asian participants of this study. This research
alludes to the need for genuine anti-racist education which involves moving away from notions
of tolerance of diversity (multicultural education) towards notions of power and difference (Dei,
2010, 2001a, 2000, 1999, 1995a). Dei (1999) argues that change can only come from an anti-
racist praxis that addresses issues of social difference and its implications for education. He
argues that critical educators must engage in transformative discourses and that “it is crucial for
critical writings to interrupt the complacency of conventional educational discourse” (p.395).
Research similar to this study has the potential to garner critical discourses that could inform
genuine change within educational structures in B.C. Arguing for the necessity of shared power
relationships within education to affect this change, Dei purports that implications for social
justice necessitate the need to add ethnic members to faculty in order to genuinely change
educational discourse through the necessary critical self-reflection that only faculty of colour can
afford (p.405). Such ethnic members would help build a better notion of leadership within
education by building upon, and not negating, the variable of race in leadership effectiveness
with marginalized minority groups. Only then will the White monopoly on knowledge be interrupted and a genuine anti-racist praxis generated. Dei (1995a) argues for an “integrative anti-racism” that crosses race, class, gender lines, sexual identity, and ability to better contextualize anti-racist discourse within the pre-existing institutional structures. This anti-racist framework would attend to the intersection of race and gender alluded to in this study but limited by CRT’s primacy of race as the key variable of oppression. This, in effect, would engage antiracist discourse at a level beyond individual prejudices and discriminatory actions towards entrenched notions of institutional and systemic racism and oppression (p.13). A decentering of power as such would afford a critical analysis of the dominant-subordinate dichotomy of power within race relations. A critical anti-racist praxis similar to that put forth by Dei (1995a) is the necessary ingredient for genuine social change in the melting pot of modern day multicultural notions within education.

In particular, this study’s findings afford insights into the racism faced by the participants of this study within the BCSD and its effects upon these South Asian administrators within their contexts as part of the educational structures of B.C. It appears that the BCSD may operate from a racialized perspective that serves to promote White interests at the expense of the racialization of ethnic interests within the district. South Asian administrators and South Asian students are racialized within the structures of the BCSD resulting in prejudiced work conditions for South Asian administrators and marginalized educational experiences for South Asian students. However, the few South Asian administrators that are part of the district undoubtedly have a positive impact on South Asian student educational experiences through their South Asian leadership style.
For the participants of this study, it is clear that race is an important facet of the operational imperatives of the BCSD as well as the educational experiences of South Asian students and administrators within the institutions of education in B.C. In order to combat racism within the BCSD, I recommend an active restructuring of the representation of South Asians and other ethnicities within leadership roles in the district. School districts must actively engage their policies of employment equity so representation is evident in all schools. As such, I propose an ethnic balance in administrative representation within the BCSD along the lines of student demographics within schools. Schools with large South Asian student populations should have South Asian administrators present in the leadership teams of these schools. Further, I propose the BCSD undertake an active policy shift towards creating anti-racist education within schools centred on an active anti-racist praxis put forth by Dei (1995a). Although the BCSD appears to attend to Dei’s (2003) notions of inclusive education, the BCSD must create an anti-racist praxis in its policy that affords a genuine and active push towards acceptance and celebration of the merits of difference within its educational structures. This education must attend to both school staff and students, and must undoubtedly reside within the White BCSD offices so as to move away from the present day notions of power differences and inequity in education within B.C.
References


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